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# kidscreen®

engaging the global children's entertainment industry

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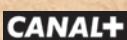
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**Cover** Our editorial cover features an exclusive piece of artwork from Cartoon Network, depicting its most iconic characters to celebrate the net's 20th anniversary. International and event copies, meanwhile, sport an ad for new CGI preschool series *Tickety Toc* from Zodiak Kids.

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# Crazy hearts, good ideas

**“I am looking for diversity, not sameness... We are always looking for new and unique voices. From anywhere. That’s it.”** Yes, that’s it. Those are the parameters Cartoon Network’s chief content officer Rob Sorcher has set for the development slate and future programming at one of the world’s largest kidsnets. A pretty simple notion when you think about it.



And by doing just that, being open to ideas from anywhere, the network now has its biggest crop of successes—*Adventure Time*, *Regular Show*, *Level Up*—since its groundbreaking *World Premiere Toons* program spawned a raft of them in late 1990s. You remember *Dexter’s Lab*, *The Powerpuff Girls* and *Cow and Chicken*, don’t you?

Sorcher’s admission, in fact, was one of the

things that really stood out to me as I was editing our comprehensive piece on Cartoon Network’s two decades in the biz (see “CN turns 20!” p.80). His views on developing a creative strategy, coupled with senior writer Kate Calder’s feature “All in the Family” (p.66), which looks at how content creators are resourcefully making time to cultivate show ideas in-house, get to the heart of what the kids entertainment business should be all about. Good ideas, heck even great ideas, can come from anywhere, and those with the power to realize those ideas on-air and online need to be open to entertaining them—no matter how far-flung.

In fact, the two things that those CN shows I mentioned all have in common are: at first glance, they’re crazy concepts; the second is they were each conceived by one driven, single-minded creator. Put those two ingredients together and what you’ve got are some outstanding original series. My fear is that this vision often gets lost as networks and prodcos scramble for the time and resources needed to get shows made and often end up going with “sure-fire” formulaic programming instead of taking calculated risks.

My challenge, should you choose to accept it, is at the next market, go ahead and take just one meeting with that seemingly off-kilter person. Sure, you might end up spending 15 minutes smiling politely while someone outlines the ways in which life-sized Norwegian troll puppets will be the next big thing with tween girls. On the other hand, you could meet that very rare individual, the crazy heart with the awesome idea. Really, what’s life or good TV without taking a chance now and then?

Cheers,  
*Lana*

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**VP & PUBLISHER**  
**Jocelyn Christie**  
[jchristie@brunico.com](mailto:jchristie@brunico.com)

## EDITORIAL

**Lana Castleman** Editor  
[lcastleman@brunico.com](mailto:lcastleman@brunico.com)

**Kate Calder** Features Editor  
[kcalder@brunico.com](mailto:kcalder@brunico.com)

**Gary Rusak** Senior Writer  
[grusak@brunico.com](mailto:grusak@brunico.com)

**Jeremy Dickson** Senior Online Writer  
[jdickson@brunico.com](mailto:jdickson@brunico.com)

**Writers and Contributors**  
Jim Benton (Bloomfield)  
Brendan Christie (Toronto)  
Brady Darvin (Irvine)  
Insight Kids (New York)  
KidSay (Olathe, KS)  
Nickelodeon Kids & Family (New York)

## BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT AND ADVERTISING SALES

(416) 408-2300, 1-800-KID-4512

**Myles Hobbs** Associate Publisher  
[mhobbs@brunico.com](mailto:mhobbs@brunico.com)

**Kristina Ejem** Account Manager  
[kejem@brunico.com](mailto:kejem@brunico.com)

**Nathaniel Martin** Account Manager  
[nmartin@brunico.com](mailto:nmartin@brunico.com)

**Vakis Boutsalis** Marketing Coordinator  
[vboutsalis@brunico.com](mailto:vboutsalis@brunico.com)

## CREATIVE

Creative Director **Stephen Stanley**  
[sstanley@brunico.com](mailto:sstanley@brunico.com)

Art Director **Andrew Glowala**  
[aglowala@brunico.com](mailto:aglowala@brunico.com)

Production/Distribution Coordinator **Robert Lines**  
[rlines@brunico.com](mailto:rlines@brunico.com)

## AUDIENCE SERVICES

Director of Audience Services and Production  
**Jennifer Colvin** [jcolvin@brunico.com](mailto:jcolvin@brunico.com)

Manager, Audience Services  
**Christine McNamee** [cmcnamley@brunico.com](mailto:cmcnamley@brunico.com)

## CORPORATE

President & CEO **Russell Goldstein**  
[rgoldstein@brunico.com](mailto:rgoldstein@brunico.com)

VP & Editorial Director **Mary Maddever**  
[mmaddever@brunico.com](mailto:mmaddever@brunico.com)

VP of Finance & Administration **Linda Lovegrove**  
[llovegrove@brunico.com](mailto:llovegrove@brunico.com)

VP & Chief Information Officer **Omri Tintpulver**  
[otintpulver@brunico.com](mailto:otintpulver@brunico.com)

VP & RealScreen Publisher **Claire Macdonald**  
[cmacdonald@brunico.com](mailto:cmacdonald@brunico.com)

## Customer care

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As part of the Licensing Show issue of Kidscreen, we're producing a sponsored supplement called **Agents of Profit** that will emphasize the importance of working with experienced licensing agents to our readership of kids entertainment brand owners. This compelling feature section will be built around interviews with companies that pay to participate.

In addition to reaching our regular subscribers—more than 12,000 kids entertainment executives operating around the world—we're distributing 2,000 extra copies of the issue on the exhibit floor at Licensing Show. Book now to be part of this high-profile promotional opportunity!

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**Booking** ..... May 2  
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## 1 Less is more

Don't look now, but it seems that Pixar may have some competition when it comes to its big-budget animated film model. While DreamWorks Animation is often viewed as Pixar's main adversary, it was Paramount Pictures that picked up the Oscar for *Rango* this year. However, what all these studios have in common is that just one of their animated pics typically comes with a price tag well in excess of US\$100 million. And then there's Universal subsidiary Illumination Entertainment. Arguably it's getting the best bang for its buck, sticking to a strategy of producing one film per year that comes in at or under US\$75 million. Its latest success, *Dr. Seuss' The Lorax*, outpaced Disney's US\$250-million box office flop *John Carter* on its opening weekend in mid-March, and Illumination's first three animated films (*Despicable Me*, *Hop* and *The Lorax*) have so far grossed a combined US\$803 million globally. The shop is also one of entertainment behemoth Universal's most profitable business units. A sea change cometh in animated feature production, we think.



## 3 Kid power

Netflix's expanding Just for Kids portal indicates the online service is making a play for an even larger chunk of the market, as viewing habits transition from film to TV content. Since the section's August launch, more than a billion hours of kids TV programming have been viewed by Netflix members. That number's set to grow with last month's Just for Kids distribution deal with the US PlayStation 3 network. According to Netflix, Xbox 360 Live and tablet manufacturers are next.



## 4 Walmart to the rescue?

In efforts to boost disintegrating home entertainment sales, five of Hollywood's six major studios have partnered with Walmart. The plan is to boost use of Cloud-based video library Ultraviolet, which the studios had been banking on as their cash-cow savior. Walmart is helping customers create Ultraviolet accounts and making Cloud-ready versions of purchased DVDs available for a small fee. We'll see if this stop-gap works.



## 5 Toy turnover

Neil Friedman left Toys 'R' Us only a few months after being named its president. The former Mattel exec made the jump to retail in April to oversee merchandise planning and allocation for the company's 860 US stores. Lauded by industry experts, the hire was to be a lynchpin of the toy retailer's new exclusive-heavy product strategy leading up to a much-rumoured (and still unrealized) IPO.



To keep up with the news as it happens, check out [kidscreen.com](http://kidscreen.com) daily.



The daughter of a US Air Force officer, **Margaret Loesch** got used to being on the move at a young age, instilling a life-long penchant for change that helped her build numerous successful series and two children's networks



**Full circle** Fast forward to 2009 when Loesch read the job description for The Hub CEO post. "Every single requirement they had listed, I had. I have been in the business [a long time] and had all sides of the business covered," says Loesch.

Two years in, Loesch says the channel has established its sea legs creatively by using reborn series based on big brands such as *My Little Pony*, *Transformers*, *G.I. Joe* and *Pound Puppies* to anchor the schedule. And with a stable of marquee brands and a raft of acquisitions in its line up, Loesch says the channel is ready to build an original slate comprised of new concepts from bigger players like Henson, as well as pitches from smaller independent studios. "The big advantage to being the new kid on the block is that we're the underdog," says Loesch. "It makes us try different things and take risks." —Kate Calder

# Coming full circle in a well-rounded career

**The gig** Founding president and CEO of The Hub, the two-year-old joint venture network owned by Discovery Communications and Hasbro. Loesch oversees all business and creative, and is tasked with increasing The Hub's reach from 60 million US cable and satellite households to more than 75 million in the few years.

**Creative impulses** Loesch's real career-making moment arguably occurred during her first job, where she worked at a financial brokerage firm. "I asked for an extended leave of absence, and they told me I could make it a permanent leave," she recalls dryly. The employer suggested that Loesch's super efficiencies and shortcut strategies would be better-suited to work in a creative field. With that, she landed her first job in television as a clerk typist at network ABC's Hollywood HQ. With no knowledge of the industry, Loesch spent her first few years asking questions and volunteering at every turn. Within four years, she was running ABC's creative services division, where she learned the craft of producing and editing.

**Learning on the job** Loesch took her first step into the kids industry when she accepted a junior post on the children's programming team at NBC a few years later. "I didn't know anything about children's programming except that I was a fan of it," says Loesch. Nevertheless, five years of hard work led to an offer from Hanna-Barbera, where she did everything from development to sales. Pumping out an average of 11 network series a year between 1979 and 1984, including *The Smurfs*, the studio flourished and so did Loesch. So when Marvel offered her the position of president and CEO, Loesch had a hard decision to make. She credits her assistant at the time for helping her make the leap. "Comfort doesn't mean growth," she reminded Loesch.

**Corporate lessons** Under her reign, Marvel released animated series *G.I. Joe*, *Transformers*, *My Little Pony* and *The Muppet Babies*. What Loesch hadn't anticipated were the corporate challenges presented by Marvel being taken private, sold twice and then downsized. "I learned a lot

about myself and how to deal with people and handle hard situations," she admits. This combination of corporate wrangling and creative development experience made her irresistible to Fox, which waited almost a year for her contract with Marvel to expire before handing the launch of the Fox Kids network over to her in the early 1990s. Saddled with an overly ambitious business plan by Fox higher-ups, Loesch made it through the first two years and eventually convinced the company to let her try out two new concepts—comic book-based show *X-Men*, and a superhero show based on long-running Japanese series *Power Rangers*. Not only were the series hits, but under her leadership Fox expanded the kidnet to Latin America, Australia and the UK.

**Out of Office**  
Tales from the frequent fliers club



**Billy Macqueen**  
MD, Darrall Macqueen



**1. In my carry-on**  
you'll find my stupidly large Apple Mac Pro, mini Bose speakers, Sennheiser headphones, chewing gum and a spare pair of glasses.

**2. My go-to gadget**  
Ear plugs—they cut out the noise of the persistent snoring from the lady or gentleman in the next seat.

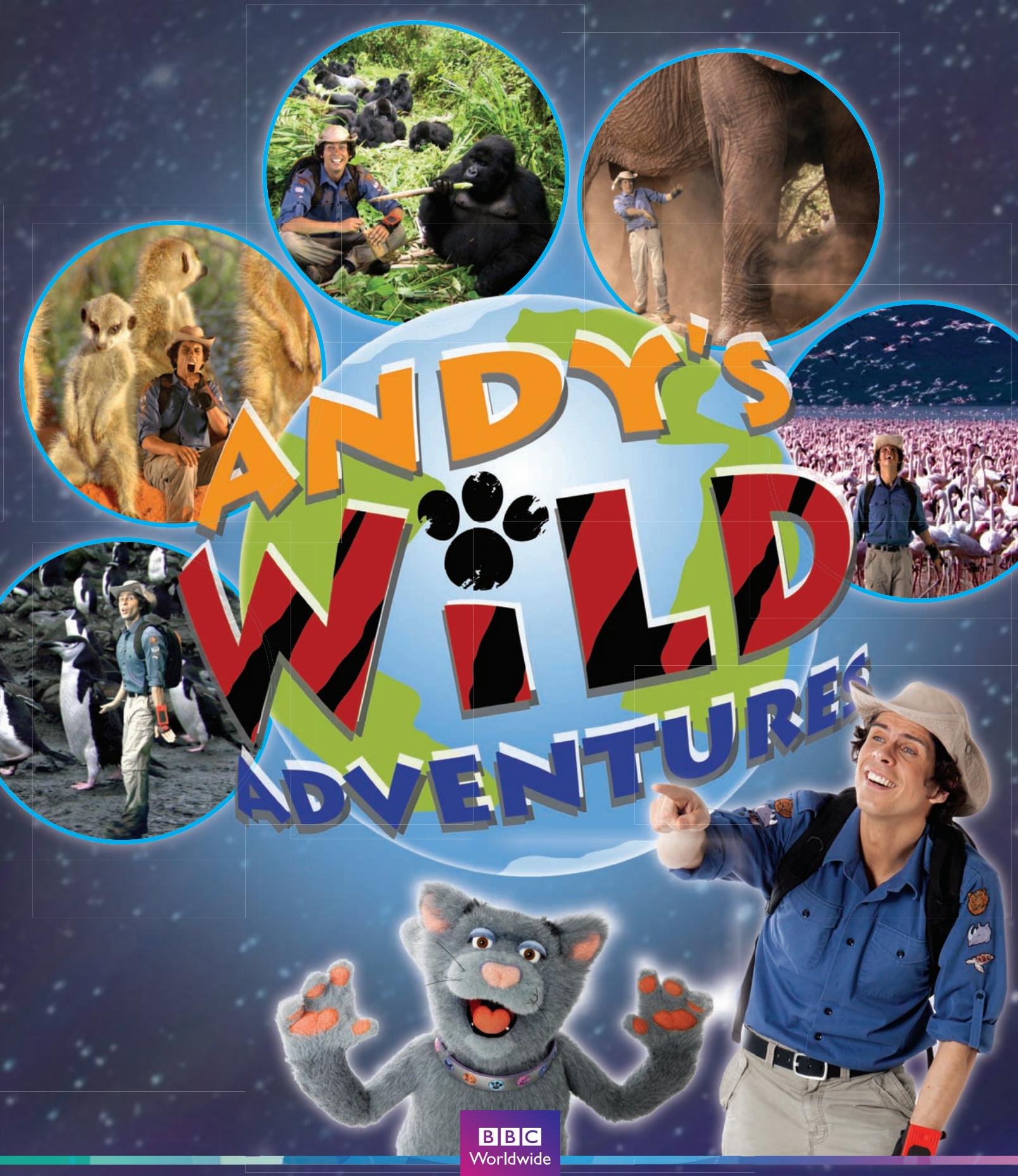
**3. On the fly**  
I've learned to look tired and always be the last person to board for the best chance of getting an upgrade on a long haul.

**4. Preferred in-air tunes**  
"Here Comes the Sun" by The Beatles.

**5. Best in-flight food**  
Cathay Pacific—by a mile. Then Qantas. Then no-one.

**6. Best power-lunch**  
I don't have the shoulder pads for power lunches, but brunches are fun. Try Bubby's in Manhattan and Elliot's Café in London, both good places for laughter.

**7. Window or aisle?**  
Window. Then at least one side is covered off from snoring, elbow jabs or drinks being dropped on my head.



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The next *SpongeBob* may be among the shorts commissioned in Nick's first comedy-only search

## Nickelodeon goes on the hunt for new comedies

**W**e'll have to wait to see its outcome, but Nickelodeon's created some serious buzz in the creative community last month with the launch of its first-ever comedy-only animated shorts search initiative. It's no secret that finding the funny isn't easy, and the US kidsnet is making it apparent that its comedy talent pool and development slate need to grow.

Accordingly, animation execs at Nick will sift through the pitches they collected over the course of three weeks last month (the deadline closed on March 30) and select 10 to be produced as one-minute comedy shorts with an eye to creating longer-form series.

Nick accepted submissions in all styles (2D, digital 2D, stop motion, CG and mixed media), casting its net wide for animation talent, including artists, designers, writers and directors from inside and outside its network. The rules stipulated that characters in the shorts must target kids ages six to 11 and appeal to both boys and girls. Human characters, meanwhile, had to be kids, but not too young. If the main characters were non-human, they could have a job or their own home, but Nick outlined that their mindset would have to be childlike or appeal to kids' sensibilities.

"President of animation Brown Johnson came up with the idea for the program to expand comedy development," says Mary Harrington, a Nickelodeon creative consultant. "There have been some other short programs launched, but never a program like this, solely dedicated to comedy. We are looking for funny characters that can really make us laugh."

Selected candidates will be given artistic and production support from Nickelodeon and the shorts will be made at Nickelodeon Animation Studios in Burbank, California, which produces hit series like *The Fairly OddParents*, *T.U.F.F. Puppy* and *SpongeBob SquarePants*.

"We will have a dedicated line producer and supervising director/producer for the program, so our intention is to provide our new creators with all the support they need to realize their visions," adds Harrington.

"We are prepared to pair creators with directors, designers and storyboard artists according to where they may need support in the filmmaking process, and the size of each team will most likely vary depending on the style of the short."

To help manage the program, 15-year Nick veteran Rich Magallanes, who was recently promoted to SVP of current series Nickelodeon Animation, will have a role to play.

"Rich has a keen eye for likeable, funny characters that can drive good situations and stories," says Harrington. "He will be involved in our selection process as we decide which shorts to produce." —Jeremy Dickson

## On the circuit

Notes for the industry travel diary

### June 1-6

**Prix Jeunesse International**

**Munich, Germany**

[www.prixjeunesse.de](http://www.prixjeunesse.de)



Get ready to celebrate and promote quality television for kids ages two to 15 that's culturally relevant, informative and entertaining as the Prix Jeunesse Foundation launches its biannual content conference. In 2010, 183 organizations from 63 countries entered 326 programs, and 436 participants from 55 countries attended the festival. This year's theme is Watch, Learn and Grow with Children's TV, and discussions will be held after the screening of each category to see what people are thinking about the current state of kids TV.

### June 5-7

**E3 Electronic Entertainment Expo**

**Los Angeles, CA**

[www.e3expo.com](http://www.e3expo.com)



Anyone invested in the hugely popular global videogame industry, including professional developers, programmers, distributors, manufacturers, retailers and geeks in general, are set to gather at the Los Angeles Convention Center for E3, the world's premiere trade show for computer and videogames. The future of interactive entertainment will no doubt be on display, including the latest technologies for computers, consoles, handheld systems, mobile and online.

### June 12-14

**Licensing International Expo**

**Las Vegas, NV**

[www.licensingexpo.com](http://www.licensingexpo.com)



It's about to get hotter in the desert as tens of thousands of licensing professionals convene at the Mandalay Bay Convention Center for Licensing Show 2012. The yearly event attracts licensors, retailers, brand owners and manufacturers seeking new properties, trends and licensing deals. Last year's show, featuring 400 exhibitors, drew approximately 21,000 pre-registered attendees from more than 90 countries.



A full listing of Industry Events is available at [kidscreen.com/events](http://kidscreen.com/events)



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# Small output, big rewards

Niche London prodco Magic Light goes on an Oscar roll

**Who** Michael Rose and Martin Pope, the founding members of London-based indie prodco Magic Light Pictures. Rose is a former head of development and executive producer at Aardman Animations, whose credits include *Wallace & Gromit* and *Chicken Run*; Pope has a background in live-action feature films (*The Heart of Me*, *Lawless Heart*) and was a producer at BBC Films.

**Bragging rights** 2012 marked the second year in a row that the pair made the trip to L.A. to attend the Academy Awards. Their animated film *Chico & Rita* was nominated for the Best Animated Feature Film Oscar this year. In 2011, half-hour film *The Gruffalo* was nominated for Best Animated Short—add that to the film's BAFTA nomination, Prix Jeunesse Award, Best TV Special nod at Annecy and two Pulcinella Awards at Cartoons on the Bay, and you'll start to get the picture.

*The Gruffalo*, adapted from the bestselling children's book by renowned authors Julia Donaldson and Axel Scheffler, was produced with the help of Ludwigsburg, Germany's Studio Soi and voiced by stars including Robbie Coltrane and Helena Bonham Carter. When it debuted on Christmas Day 2009 in the UK, it was seen by more than 10 million viewers and it has since aired in December 2010 on ABC Family in the US. This past Christmas, Magic Light released a companion special, *The Gruffalo's Child*, on BBC1, where it drew another 10 million viewers and was the top-performing program across all channels in the UK for the month.

**Staying true to the story** Magic Light is heading into production on another half-hour animation, *Room on the Broom*, based on the Halloween-themed children's book by Donaldson and Scheffler.

"We didn't set out to do specials," says Rose. "I think ordinarily everyone would say that we're mad." He admits that specials are a tough market, but explains that the two Gruffalo specials were a better fit for the source material than a series. And drawing from Rose's experience with *Wallace & Gromit*, which was originally three half-hour specials, they decided it was possible to craft a Gruffalo brand on the back of an hour of programming.

**Next moves** Rose and Pope say they are open to taking on new IPs, but will stick to their mantra of doing very little, very well. In the meantime, they're working on building up the Gruffalo and *Room on the Broom* brands in the wake of their critical praise, and hope that the specials and their related merchandise will be seen as perennials.

In the UK, the prodco has signed more than 35 Gruffalo licensees, and products will soon be rolling out in Australia, New Zealand and Scandinavia. Next, the team will focus on launching a North American program. Stateside, *Room on the Broom* is a better known publishing IP and outsells the Gruffalo titles. Already the company has brought Kids Preferred on-board for plush and toys and University Games for puzzles and games. In the UK and other territories outside the US, Pope says *Room* will be presented as "from the authors of *The Gruffalo*" and will incorporate packaging that complements Gruffalo products. —Kate Calder



Magic Light Pictures is building a perennial brand based on its Gruffalo specials

## Know your audience

By Jim Benton

sometimes I feel sorry for babies who are obviously trying to maintain their dignity, but have no idea how their parents have dressed them.

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### TOY PARTNERS



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It's been a busy quarter for the world's largest toyco. After Mattel closed its US\$680-million acquisition of children's entertainment producer and rights owner HIT Entertainment from Apax Partners on February 1, HIT lost its president and CEO, **Jeffrey Dunn**, and COO

**Sangeeta Desai**. Dunn, who led the company since March 2008, would exit immediately after the closure. And Desai, at HIT since 2009, would leave after a short transition period.

Dunn and Desai helped grow HIT's brands including hit preschool IPs Thomas & Friends, Mike the Knight and Fireman Sam. Under Mattel's ownership, Fisher-Price EVP **David Allmark** is undertak-

ing several new hires, bringing **Bethan Parry** in to take on a newly created role as retail development manager, and promoting **Helena Mansell-Stopher** to senior manager of category management. She will focus on Mattel's existing portfolio and all new IP launches in the UK.

On the toy retailing front, the executive shake-up at Toys 'R' Us continues following the resignation of president of US operations **Neil Friedman**. After 10 months with the company, Friedman will now become an advisor to toy-related companies, including TRU, which intends to retain his advisory services on a non-exclusive basis. Friedman is

merchandising for the core toy, seasonal and learning product categories.

Still with consumer products, the lead-in to Licensing International Expo continues. For one, **Bettina Arff** has joined Nickelodeon Consumer Products as its new licensing director covering Germany, Switzerland and Austria. Arff comes over from Endemol, where she was senior manager of business development for Germany, Austria, Switzerland and Eastern Europe. For NCP, she'll be working on developing and expanding the presence of Viacom International Media Networks' portfolio of family entertainment, including Dora the Explorer

slate of family entertainment, including recently announced telenovela *Reach For A Star*.

Over at ABC Australia, **Carla de Jong [D]** head of commissioning and development for the children's division has left after a four-year stint and heads to Toronto, Canada next to be a children's content consultant. At ABC, she was instrumental in the creation of ABC3, helped the revitalization of ABC4Kids, and also commissioned hit dramas *My Place* and *Dance Academy*. As part of an ABC restructure, the Children's TV commissioning department is now divided into two areas. Overseeing animation is **Chris Rose**, who hops over from HIT

Young Adults and Kids Media Group.

Watts Meraz leaves her role as VP of content acquisitions for Showtime Networks and is now part of Turner's corporate acquisitions team, which makes overall company content buys.

In Muppet territory, The Jim Henson Company has promoted two members of its creative team, **Meghan Sheridan** (*Pajanimals*, *Me & My Monsters*) and **Blanca Lista** (*Pinocchio*), to serve as directors in television development and features, respectively. Both will be responsible for bringing in new projects, writers and talent.

Moving to interactive business, Callaway Digital

# people



ing direction for the brand portfolios of both HIT and Fisher-Price.

In other Fisher-Price news, Mattel has appointed **Jennifer Bennett [A]** to its New York offices as director of licensing acquisitions for Fisher-Price. She assumes part of Stan Clutton's SVP remit in the wake of the Fisher-Price veteran's passing last December. Bennett, who will report to Mattel VP of licensing acquisitions, Holly Stein, is looking after inbound licensing for the toy maker. Prior to her appointment, she was VP of licensing and merchandising at Toronto, Canada's eOne, where she headed up North American L&M efforts including the rollout of the US Peppa Pig licensing program.

Mattel Brands Consumer Products UK has also

the sixth top-level executive who has left the company since Gerald Storch became CEO in 2006.

In other Toys 'R' Us happenings, the US merchandising division has upped 26-year TRU vet **Richard Barry** to SVP and chief merchandising officer, and **Lisa Harnisch** becomes SVP and general merchandising manager for toys. Barry, who was most recently VP and general merchandising manager for Toys 'R' Us, will report to Storch and be responsible for the company's US merchandising initiatives at Toys 'R' Us and Babies 'R' Us stores nationwide, as well as the FAO Schwarz flagship store in New York. Harnisch, who was most recently VP and general merchandising manager for core and seasonal toys, now reports to Barry and is managing

and music-based hit *Victorious*.

Additionally, Nickelodeon Australia and New Zealand has appointed **Tina McIntosh [B]** as the kidnet's new director of marketing and commercial partnerships. Making the jump from a director of marketing and communications role for MTV and Comedy Central, McIntosh will be responsible for promoting Nickelodeon's channels and their brands to consumers, carriers and advertisers.

Switching to broadcasting, Nickelodeon welcomes back one of its former executives **Sal Maniaci [C]**, who rejoins the channel as its new SVP of event and original programming. He'll oversee production of Nickelodeon's franchise events, including the *Kids' Choice Awards* and the *TeenNick HALO Awards*, as well as supervising current series for Nick at Nite's new

Entertainment, where he was VP of programming and development. Live action now falls under the leadership of **Simon Hopkinson**, who was previously responsible for commissioning both drama and animation programming for ABCTV's children's channels.

Back in the US, kids cablenet The Hub has promoted **Ted Biasselli** to VP of programming. Biasselli will help guide The Hub's slate of original new series, including *Kaijudo: Rise of the Duel Masters* and *The Aquabats! Super Show!*, from development through production.

In Atlanta, **Valerie Watts Meraz** has been tapped by Turner Broadcasting Systems, as its new VP of program acquisitions for Turner Entertainment Networks (TEN) and the

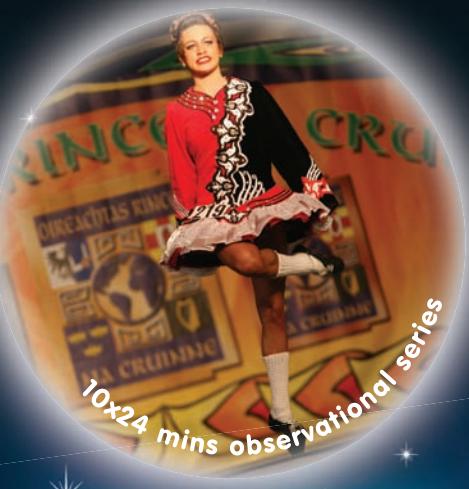
Arts welcomes **Lisa Holton**, CEO and founder of kids digital media producer Fourth Story Media, as its new VP of content development. Holton will act as executive producer for the Learning Applications Media Partnership Project, an interactive educational program funded by a grant from the US Department of Education.

Over at Limassol, Cyprus-based mobile entertainment network Outfit 7, former Disney Consumer Products (DCP) chairman **Andy Mooney** has taken on an advisor role to help grow Outfit 7's Talking Friends franchise and further establish its reputation in new entertainment development. Mooney left DCP in September 2011 after leading the company for nearly 12 years.

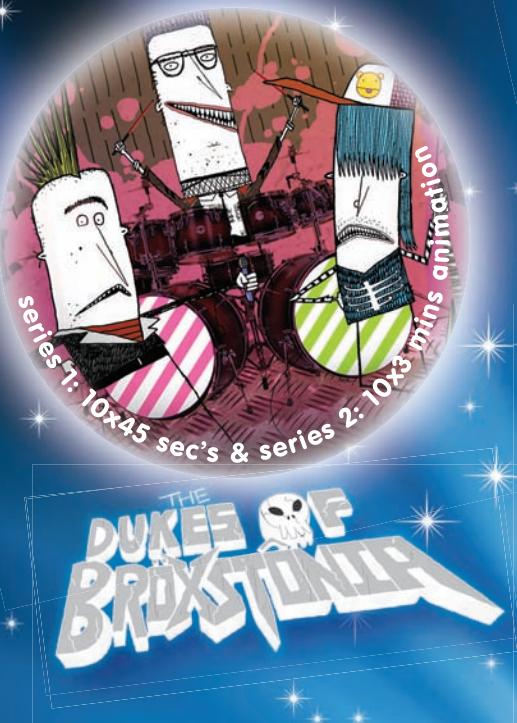


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AUDIOVISUAL  
FROM SPAIN



Families compete against each other in life-sized Hasbro games on The Hub's Family Game Night

# Smells like competitive spirit

**The next gen of kid-versioned game shows keeps viewers engaged and budgets in check**

BY KATE CALDER

In

the last several years, competition-based shows for children have upped the ante to bring their viewers a level of jeopardy they've come to expect from the primetime fare they're watching with their parents. Underlying the extreme stakes and adrenaline-fueled action depicted in the kid versions of adult shows like *Survive This* (9 Story Entertainment for Cartoon Network) and *Fort Boyard—Ultimate Challenge* (Zodiak Kids for Disney XD, CiTV), this new crop of game shows has managed to keep budgets in check and viewer numbers up by following a simple rule—kids just like to play and will lose themselves in the spirit of a great game.

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Contestants from the US and UK cheer for each other on Zodiak Kids' competition show, *Fort Boyard-Ultimate Challenge*, modelled after its long-running adult counterpart

### Kids put to the test

"They don't want second-best programming," says Nigel Pickard, CEO of UK Kids and Family at Zodiak Media Group. "Kids want to see their contemporaries doing the real thing."

The original, adult-focused *Fort Boyard* is sold into more than 30 territories and has dominated France 2's primetime summer schedule every year since 1990. The kids version, produced by The Foundation (a Zodiak company) and Adventure Line Productions, is set in the same Napoleonic sea fort located off the West coast of France. It's conducted in a tournament style, so mixed teams of US and British kid contestants compete to find a hidden treasure.

And while it seems just as high in intensity as the adult version, Pickard's team had to design the challenges specifically for kids. Among the 70-plus feats contestants are challenged with on the show, he says none rely on brute strength alone, which would be unfair to the competitors—given their mix of ages, sizes and sexes.

Pickard notes it's also getting easier to make location-based game shows as reality television enters its second decade as a widespread genre. "More people specialize in this type of production now, which has made them more practical and less expensive to do," says Pickard. In fact, he adds, entire tech crews have earned their industry chops working on the likes of *Fear Factor* and *Survivor*, and they now come to set equipped with more experience and know-how than ever before. Additionally, lighter-weight gear and newer, more inventive ways of rigging up cameras to capture the action encourage the type of innovation and interaction that is suited to filming kid contestants.

With only a limited amount of time allotted for filming its kid contestants, the *Fort Boyard-Ultimate Challenge* crew shot three to four shows a day over the course of just a few weeks. Producers then had the painstaking task of editing eps in post-production into a reality format that showcased the physical challenges, while depicting the emotional journeys the kids took.

Pickard says he was genuinely surprised by the kids' ability to grasp and tackle the obstacles, and their appetite to keep trying new challenges. "The teams were naturally supportive of each other, which wasn't contrived on-air," he notes. "It was built up naturally by the kids living together on location."

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**"They don't want to see second-best programming...Kids want to see their contemporaries doing the real thing."**

—Nigel Pickard, Zodiak Kids

### The cost of compelling

To satisfy both Disney and CiTV, Zodiak brought in two hosts and contestants from the US and UK to work together and represent the audience of each territory. "The broadcasters want to push the ambition of the show and have the best quality possible," says Pickard. He says the market has opened up to these kinds of international co-productions, but it's got to be affordable. And broadcaster support, in Zodiak's case, was crucial. "Each territory subsidizes the other. What [broadcasters] get is that for something that costs them say, US\$50, they end up getting a US\$150 value on-screen."

Similarly, an exciting, and larger than life extravaganza of impossible challenges called *Destroy Build Destroy* was what L.A.-based Dan Taberski came up with for Cartoon Network when his company, Idiot Box Productions, was asked to pitch an idea that would complement the net's first foray into live action in 2009. Idiot Box paired up with Mess Media, also out of L.A. (the company specializes in putting together big complex location shoots). With commission in-hand, the production team on *Destroy Build Destroy* began hauling cranes, tanks and an army of vehicles out to a desert lot to shoot

## The art of hospitality

Todd Newton dishes on what makes a good game show host



Todd Newton, host of The Hub's *Family Game Night*, has been in the game show business since 1999 and learned how to ply his craft from the best. That's right, Newton got first-hand coaching on the

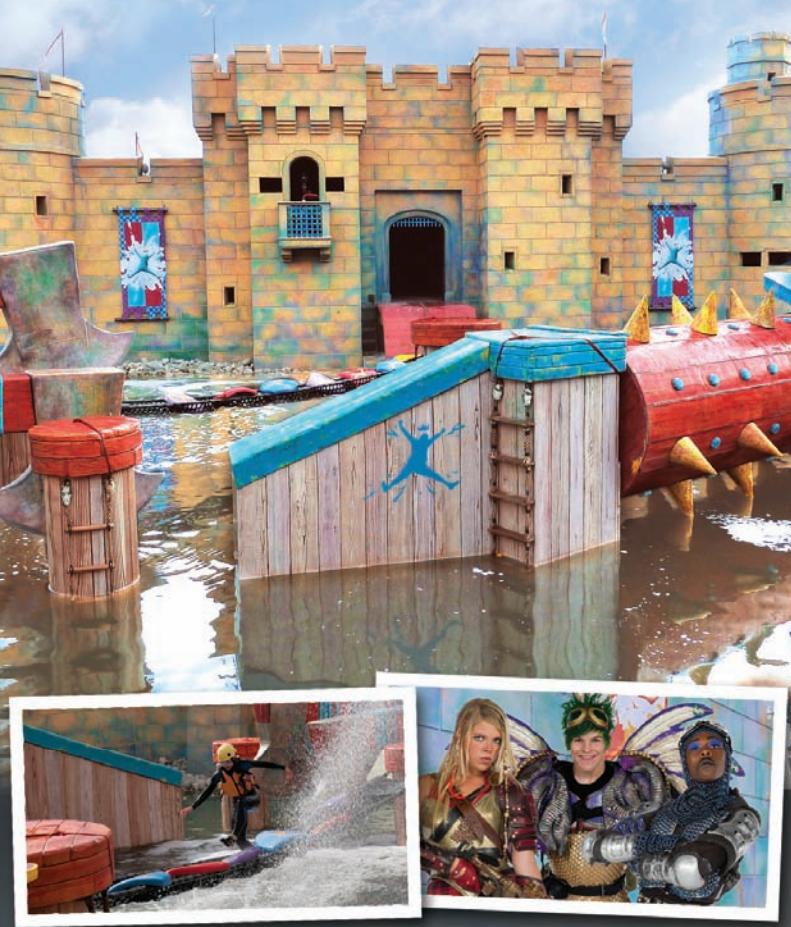
art of hosting a game show from *The Price is Right*'s legendary Bob Barker when he took a stint helming stage show *The Price is Right Live* in Las Vegas.

"It's completely different from acting or hosting a reality show. As a game show host, you're there overseeing the entire production while the cameras are rolling," says Newton. "It's more than just a game; it's building drama, it's laying out all the possible scenarios, it's keeping everyone involved and engaged."

The difference when it comes to hosting a game show for kids, he explains, is that children aren't focusing on strategy or winning the prize. "You can really see that when they step up to the giant Connect Four basketball board [on our show], they just want the ball to go in, they are just thinking about the right now."

Newton says he's been picked up and swung around by overjoyed contestants more times than he can count ("Dads tend to get excited when they win trips to Jamaica!"), but he says his favorite part of the show is being part of family moments on-screen. "This is a pressure situation, and when a kid really comes through and holds it together and exceeds expectations, it's really cool for the parents to see," says Newton. "I love the little moments that the camera doesn't pick up, the 'I Love You's' that are whispered quietly in the kids' ears that only I can hear."

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13-year-old Bindi Irwin  
hosts *Bindi's Bootcamp*,  
set to launch later this  
year on ABC Australia



the series. The show, hosted by US comedian and musical performer Andrew W.K., pits two teams against one another as they destroy a large object, rebuild it into something different, and then, you guessed it, destroy it again.

"The budget was healthy, but tight," says Taberski. "We put every penny on screen, so it looks like it cost a lot more than it did." And although he wouldn't discuss figures, having the network's financial backing was essential. "They understood that it costs money to get these things right," he explains.

### Kids keep it real

Taberski says the kids—who are already savvy reality show viewers and familiar with its tropes, like the confessional on-camera interview—were wary of being asked questions on-screen. "We'd be asking them questions and they'd say, 'Oh, so I'm the one who is causing trouble?'" The prodco, however, stayed away from generating conflict between the kids and stuck to capturing the fun of the process and the teamwork it required. Taberski adds that after filming season one, the production upped the comedy factor in particular by letting host Andrew W.K.'s zany personality shine through to get the kids laughing.

Next up, Taberski is working with London-based Standing Still Productions on an in-studio series that's smaller in physical scale and budget than *DBD*, but just as steeped in creativity and fun. *Locomoto* is a show in which kids build elaborate machines to produce chain reactions using everyday things, like an umbrella or a Rubik's cube, to accomplish a seemingly simple feat such as rolling a ball forward. "That sort of building and ingenuity is really fun to bring out in kids," says Taberski.

### The spirit of play

In the US, fun is also the name of game for The Hub's original series *Family Game Night*. The show is based on a battery of classic games belonging to parentco Hasbro like Yahtzee, Sorry, Cranium and Scrabble, which are brought to life on-set when two families are pitted against each other.

Even for a set-based series, Hasbro Studios VP of reality and game show production and development Kevin Belinkoff explains that the audience's expectation is high. To that end, the HD show uses complex graphics and flashy sets. However, he says the favorites are always the games that are simple and easy to play. Having been in the game show business for more than 12 years, Belinkoff says shows that keep people coming back highlight the spirit of competition and provide a quality opportunity to watch other people play and win.

"What is constantly reiterated to me is that the prize is not what's important; it's about the playing itself," says Belinkoff. In fact, even given its trips and trampolines, the prize that elicited has one of the biggest reactions from winners so far on *FGN* was



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Host Andrew W.K. upped the comedy factor for Cartoon Network's large-scale competition series *Destroy Build Destroy*

a fairly economical limo ride to school. He also recalls when two kids who were on-hand as backup contestants ended up breaking into tears when it turned out that they weren't needed on-set, even though they were both given new bicycles as consolation gifts. Another lesson in kids game shows—the participants don't like to wait to have their turn. So the FGN team learned to create challenges where both teams compete at the same time.

Hasbro Studios is also looking at rolling the show out internationally and to that end has just recently completed the first season of a Spanish version. Shot on-set in Spain, albeit with a smaller budget and less extravagant stage, Belinkoff says the format has proven to be strong enough that he's talking to several different territories about producing other localized versions. Though not all of the Hasbro games are as well-known outside of the US, he says the challenges are fun in and of themselves and act to introduce the games to new consumers. "It's also a great incubator for me to try different challenges and game titles overseas. If new challenge formats work, bring them back here," says Belinkoff.

### Going global

Sander Schwartz, president of Kids and Family Entertainment at FremantleMedia Enterprises, says the company is also looking to sell brand-new series *Bindi's Bootcamp* into other territories after its launch later this year on ABC Australia. Produced with ABC and Oz's Sticky Pictures, the show stars the late Crocodile Hunter's daughter Bindi Irwin as the host of a competition show. In each ep kids vie against each other to complete obstacle-based challenges using the Australia Zoo as a backdrop.

"You have to find new ways of doing lower-cost productions, and live-action competition shows are cost-effective compared to scripted or animated fare," says Schwartz.

He adds that there is the possibility to sell both a dubbed version and a localized version in territories already familiar with Bindi. For local versions, Schwartz is open to bringing on a new host who has the personality to carry the show, or asking Bindi herself to perform hosting duties. "We can do 26 episodes in 12 days of shooting, so it's not a huge commitment of her time, and she knows the format so well now," he explains. **k**

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Disney's EMEA production hub brought Titmouse and Boulder Media on-board to produce its latest series, *Randy Cunningham: Ninth Grade Ninja*

## Working with the Mouse

**VP of original series Orion Ross gives the low-down on Disney's development process**

Last month, Disney EMEA's London production hub announced that it had fired up work on *Randy Cunningham: Ninth Grade Ninja*, a new 52 x 11-minute action-comedy series set to premiere on Disney XD globally this fall, with the help of two studios located on opposite sides of the Atlantic.

"We're often the matchmaker," says Disney EMEA VP of original series Orion Ross. "You need a lot of different people working in a lot of places geographically, so you need that one creator whose consistent vision is going to make it work." In this case, the original series idea came from two sitcom writers who had mostly worked in the live-action arena. Disney introduced the duo to L.A.-based Titmouse, which is leading pre-production creative for the series, and commissioned Boulder Media in Dublin, Ireland to handle the animation process through to post-production. Ross says Disney liked Boulder's comedic instincts, in particular, and the way that both companies have attracted great talent in general.

### To the test

"We're a very active and demanding development partner," says Ross. Every pilot the hub develops goes through a fairly rigorous testing process to determine whether or not it will be made into a full-fledged series. The 20 or so staffers on the original production team act as a critical first audience. Pilots that make it past them go through qualitative and quantitative testing with focus groups before being subjected to a programmer review, in which scheduling executives at Disney Channels Worldwide assess whether or not the show will work on their airwaves.

"Every show is different, but you want some consistency to evaluate how it performs," says Ross. "But if we really believe in something and the talent, and the testing is so-so, the results provide valuable information about what we need to work on [to improve the show]."

### The art of notes

Like *Randy Cunningham*, much of Disney's animation work is conducted between teams located in different countries, so being on time and giving clear and concise notes is crucial. "No one wants to get a note on an animatic that says, 'Needs more wow factor.' It's got to be specific," says Ross. To that end, he says Disney's production hub employs many people with past production experience, including former animators and script writers who've been on the receiving end of production notes and can articulate clear critiques and directions.

In the meantime, Ross says the team is out there looking for great ideas and then figuring out the best possible way to get them made. And what if someone in-house had a great series concept? There might be some legal hoops to jump through, but Ross "wouldn't discriminate against them if they happened to work here." —Kate Calder

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## NowTrending—Media

What's bubbling up in kid content culture



NBA star Chris Webber is among a handful of celebs featured in CN's bullying awareness film *Speak Up*

### War on bullying forges ahead

Determined to keep up awareness for anti-bullying, last month Cartoon Network aired *Speak Up*, a half-hour original documentary that grew out of its social initiative "Stop Bullying: Speak Up." The program was introduced by President Barack Obama and includes candid interviews with kids between eight and 13 years old, who share their experiences about being bullied, being bystanders in a bullying situation or even being the bullies themselves. The film also features *Dude What Would Happen* hosts, NBA star Chris Webber, BMX pro Matt Wilhelm, and NASCAR racers Trevor Bayne and Joey Logano, who talk about dealing with bullying.

After airing, CN made the film available for free on [www.stopbullyingspeakup.com](http://www.stopbullyingspeakup.com) as well as across multiple platforms, including Comcast Xfinity, Facebook, iTunes, Xbox360+Kinect and YouTube for up to two weeks.

### OMG, a cooking show for BFFs!

Tween girls now have a cooking show just for them. *Food Star* is one of several web series on girl-targeted social media site Sweety High, which has more than 170,000 registered members. The series has already got the attention of *Wall Street Journal* blog Speakeasy,



which likened the show to *Rachel Ray* for kids. Hosted by sisters Sophie and Emily Everhard, who were recruited from Sweety's online community, the first webisode focused on jazzing up a classic turkey sandwich with the help of *Make It or Break It* teen celeb Josie Loren. The series will also host more stars from shows airing on Nickelodeon, ABC Family and Disney Channel to share their favorite recipes.

### Tablet tally

The latest tablet stats from Nielsen show an unsurprising increase in kids' tablet use. According to a recent survey of adults with kids under 12 in tablet-owning households, in Q4 2011 seven out of every 10 used a tablet—an increase of 9% just since Q3. Based on what parents said about their kids' tablet usage, 77% of kids used the tablets to play downloaded games, 57% used educational apps, 43% watched TV shows and movies and 55% used the device to keep them occupied while travelling.

Jess and Ben,  
hosts of *KiKA LIVE*

# KiKA courts older kids

**With a revamped design and sked the German pubcaster sets its sights beyond preschool**

**The challenge** As its 15th anniversary approached, German kidnet KiKA was looking at how to mark the occasion. A new brand strategy based on attracting more older kid viewers and a complete logo and ident refresh fit the bill. KiKA's head of fiction Sebastian Debertin explains that the new logo and channel design have a more contemporary look that's meant to appeal to older kids and give a fresh new identity to programming for different age groups. "The new design helps distinguish between programming for the three target groups," says Debertin, which include preschoolers, six- to nine-year-olds and kids 10 and up.

**For You** The new tagline, "Für Dich" ("For You"), speaks to a strong effort to offer programming that reflects kids' lives and resonates strongly with the intended target. "It means that the programming relies and reflects on the dreams and hopes of kids, but also captures the concerns, problems and details of their everyday lives," says Debertin. "It is tailored to their needs and made for them," he adds. So for kids ages six to nine, besides returning favorites like *Dance Academy*, documentaries and live-action series will be a special focus.

**Aging up** KiKA's documentary series *Daily Doku*, airing weekdays at 3 p.m., will air the second season of *To Be a Hero* on Tuesdays, as well as its other new titles *My Style*, *Traineeship In the Capital* and *My New Family*. A new environmentally conscious magazine series *Earth to Future* will bow in May, and new format *Look into my World* follows the story of a nomad girl who lives in Namibia.

Meant to gather more preteen eyeballs from February on is *Abused*, the made-for-TV movie focused on the mature and difficult topic of sexual abuse. The film is one of several set to roll out

based on the channel's successful crime series *KRIMI.DE*.

Also acting on the "For You" mandate, Debertin says Ben and Jess, the hosts of

the channel's show *KiKA LIVE*, will once a month perform a special favor for a viewer.

**Online plans** Debertin says the network is beefing up its free online portal to reach kids where they are increasingly spending more time. KiKA+ will offer live online simulcasts of regular channel programming and act as a media center to provide free access to series on-demand.

The channel also plans to keep up momentum with its online community mein!KiKA, which Debertin says had a 354% boost in new members last year, bringing its total number of active users up to more than 16,000. The channel has introduced LiLA, a new virtual preteen character who lives in mein!KiKA. She acts as a host for the evening programming block airing Monday to Thursday between 8 p.m. and 9 p.m. and serves as the connecting link between the channel's online and on-air content.

**Plans for preschoolers** The channel hasn't forgotten its core base of preschool viewers. The world of KIKANINCHEN now has a new host, Jule, as well as new programming that includes a film-length version of the longtime classic series *Our Sandman*, called *Sandman: Adventures in Dreamland*. The channel will also launch new animated series *Guess How Much I Love You*, *The Little Prince* and *My Friend Conn*.

**On the lookout** Debertin hasn't stopped hunting for new programming by any means, and says that his series shopping list for 2012 includes live-action fare for six- to nine-year-olds, in particular dramedies. He's also on the prowl for smart animated series for the six to nine set. —Kate Calder

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**KiKA**

**Flexible**

Head of fiction Sebastian Debertin says KiKA's previous logo was too young-looking and didn't appeal to older viewers, especially preteens. The new logo, which is more compact and distinct, is designed to be customized according to the target demo. So this version, for example, is chunkier and bolder to appeal to the channel's 10 and up crowd.



**Dot-free**

KiKA's new preschool logo has a softer, more playful look meant to appeal to younger viewers. But what happened to that iconic KI.KA dot? "There was no need or explanation for the dot," says Debertin. "Kinderkanal is written as one word and so now is KiKA."

# The UK's 4 to 6 set sticks close to CBeebies

Zeroing in on the viewing habits of four- to six-year-olds in the UK reveals that the Beeb's channels rule across terrestrial and digital platforms with the young demo



HIT's *Mike the Knight* scored big ratings with the UK preschool crowd in December

**A**mong kids specialty channels, CBeebies dominated the broadcast landscape with a 10.4% marketshare of the older preschool demo in December 2011. It reached a 19.8% share among kids four to six over the first semester of 2011, based on the net's airtime hours between 6 a.m. to 9 a.m.—a share which Eurodata TV research manager Johanna Karsenty says has grown over the last few years. In fact, the top-15 programs with British kids ages four to six in the first half of 2011 sit on CBeebies, including *Grandpa in my Pocket*, *Pinky Dinky Doo*, *The Octonauts*,

*Chuggington*, *Bob the Builder* and *Waybuloo*. In December, the best-rated shows on the channel were seasonal special *CBeebies Christmas Panto*, original production *Justin's House* and *Mike the Knight*. It's also worth noting that CBBC, which serves older kids, still draws a good number of preschoolers, and it achieved a 4.2% share of four to sixes in December.

Free-to-air generalist channel BBC1, meanwhile, is the top-performing channel among children four to six in terms of marketshare, beating CBeebies in December 2011 with 10.8% of the demo. Although CBeebies has a small afternoon block on BBC1, Karsenty says preschoolers are mainly attracted to the channel for the shows they watch with their parents and siblings, such as *Strictly Come Dancing*, *EastEnders* and *Doctor Who*. In December, in particular, *The Gruffalo's Child*, which aired on BBC1, was the most-watched show on all generalist channels.

Karsenty also observes that four- to six-year-olds in the UK are more likely than other Euro kids to see locally produced live-action programming, like BBC commission *Grandpa in My Pocket*. In France, for example, she notes that the top-rated shows are almost all animated. Overall, the show rankings in the UK habitually include more youth, factual and entertainment series than in other European countries like France, Spain and Italy.

As for other terrestrial nets, Channel 5, which had a December 2011 marketshare of 4.5%, airs the top-performing preschool shows on generalist channels as part of its morning Milkshake block (6 a.m. to 9 a.m. on weekdays and a bit later on weekends). Over the first half of 2011, the block achieved a 15.4% share of children four to six. Karsenty says it's one of the only blocks on a generalist channel that has managed to increase its audience size year-on-year, adding that its superstar series *Peppa Pig* sometimes beats CBeebies in its timeslot. Also performing well for Milkshake are *Bananas in Pyjamas*, *Ben & Holly's Little Kingdom*, *Roary the Racing Car*, *Mr. Men* and *Fifi and the Flowertots*.

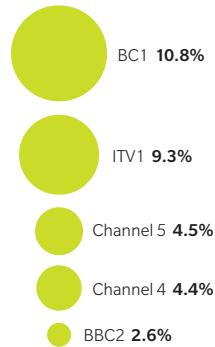
Cable channel Nick Jr., which holds onto a 2.7% marketshare, airs programming similar to Milkshake, even sharing *Peppa* and *Ben & Holly's*. And interestingly, generalist terrestrials Channel 4 and ITV have captured a decent share of preschoolers with shows like *Britain's Got Talent* and, of course, *The Simpsons*. Airing on Channel 4, the now-classic Fox animated series ranked fourth overall in the most-watched shows among four to sixes in December.

Tiny Pop, a local pay-TV channel owned by CSC Media, weighs in with a 1.4% market share, on par with Nick Jr. 2 and Disney Junior Plus, which Karsenty attributes to the fact that it's part of the basic cable package. —Kate Calder

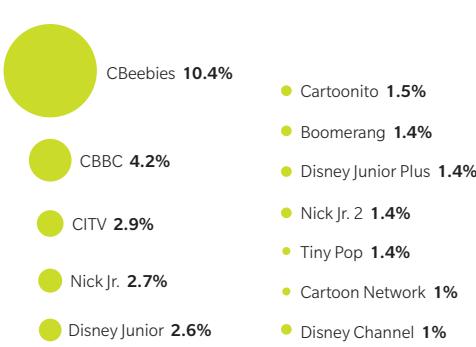
## Market share

Children 4 to 6 (December 2011)

### Generalist Channels

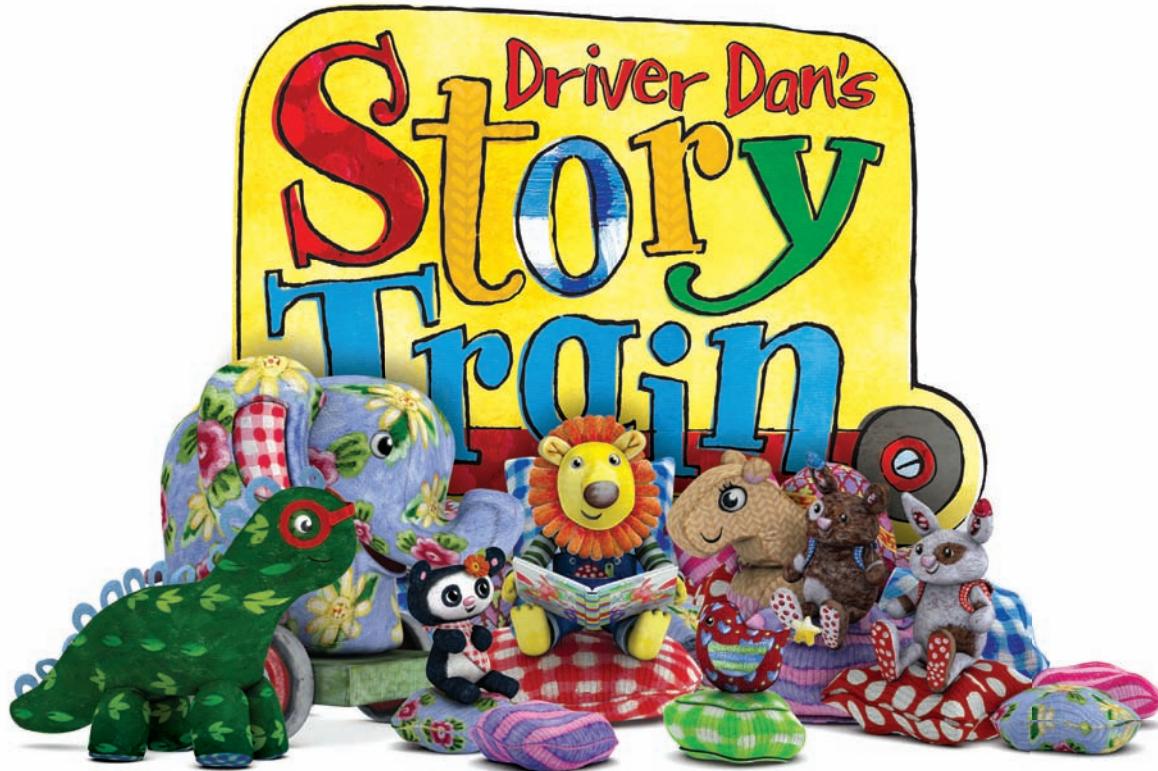


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# Olive the Ostrich



Initially launched last September on Nick Jr. UK, London-based blue-zoo Animation Studio's *Olive the Ostrich* was attracting more than 5,000 emails a week from viewers by the beginning of this year. The missives are largely from children eager to submit their artwork in the hopes of it being brought to life in the remaining six episodes of the 53 x five-minute series that are set to air this month. The show follows the young Aussie ostrich who buries her head in the sand and then goes on imaginary travels to places inhabited by characters and objects hand-drawn by viewers. Distribution 360 has sold the series worldwide to Nickelodeon as well as to Hop! Channel in Israel, and at press time it was in final talks with a major US broadcaster.

## On-air



## UK prodco blue-zoo puts kids in the animated picture

**For kids by kids** With the financial backing of UK charitable org The Prince's Foundation for Children & the Arts in place, the blue-zoo team travelled to more than 46 schools located in disadvantaged neighborhoods across the country to get the series rolling in 2010.

At the schools, the team presented the storylines of different episodes and explained how the animation process worked to kids. The students then happily created a plethora of drawings that the animators took back to the shop and used as backgrounds, environments and objects to frame individual episodes.

**From sketch to screen** To further boost the interactivity, the last six episodes in the first-season run were set aside to feature artwork submitted by kid viewers after the show had started airing and they were familiar with it. From January to April 1, children were able to listen to unanimated storylines online and then submit artwork created via Nickelodeon's online interactive paint package or hand-drawn and then scanned for online submission. The animation team now has three weeks to sift through the artwork—more than 11,000 drawings—and incorporate it into the remaining finished episodes.

Going forward, blue-zoo director Daniel Isman says a second series is in the works. If it's greenlit, he'd like to work with the Prince's Foundation again to amass the initial raft of kids artwork required for the episodes. "It was tremendously rewarding for the people making the program and the kids themselves," he says. "We'd want to try and replicate that."

**Worldwide kid contributors** For now the first season will air on Nickelodeon channels and Israel's Hop! Channel as is. But Isman says blue-zoo is open to localizing episodes with artwork from kids in different territories, and the production facility is kitted out to turn around episodes with customized drawings on a one-off basis. For their part, broadcasters just need the ability to upload the pictures to their websites.

"We'll be working to try and make that happen in one or two key territories," says Isman. With a template from Nick Jr.'s site to model after and the proven web traffic stats, Isman says he expects some territories to come on-board.

**Next moves** The Nick Jr. UK site has been promoting online involvement with the show through competitions. And the net is encouraging kids to keep coming back to the site by featuring pictures not selected for the eps in online galleries. The prodco is also now on the hunt for licensees in publishing and other pre-school categories. —Kate Calder

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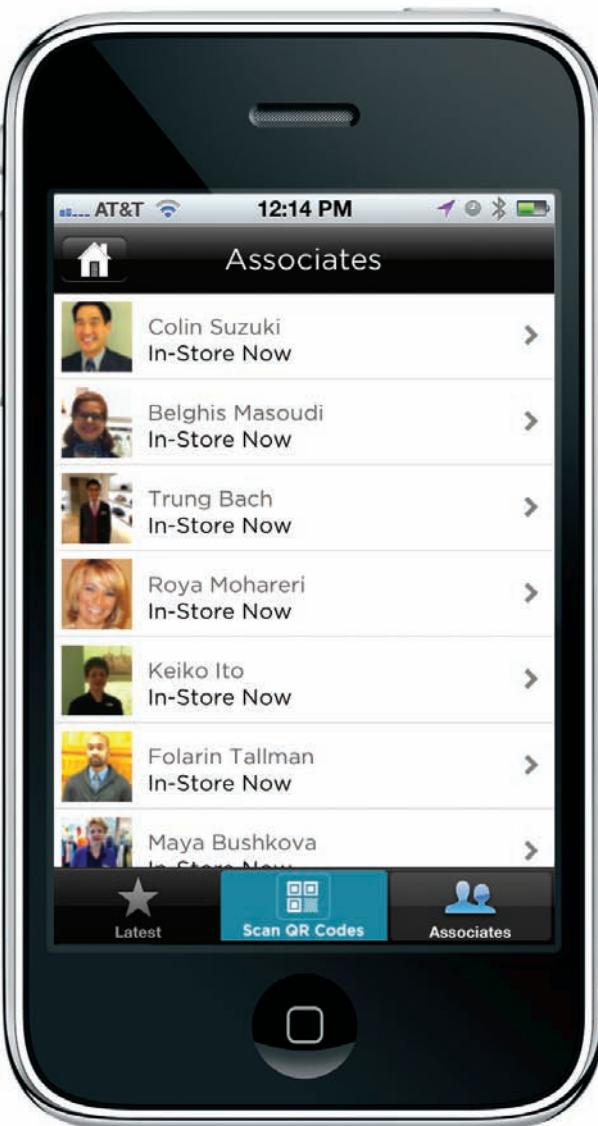
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# Where retail's at

**Location-based shopping apps are close to reaching the tipping point in North America**

BY GARY RUSAK

Only a few years ago, some retail watchers were wondering how traditional shopping outlets would adjust to the world of e-commerce. Would visits to local specialty shops become a thing of the past once consumers were able to lounge around their houses, ordering any array of products online and have them neatly delivered to their doorsteps? While e-commerce continues to grow, traditional shopping patterns of the average consumer have not changed enough to make bricks-and-mortar outlets obsolete. But that's not to say that traditional retailing isn't feeling the effects of e-volution. As smartphones continue to proliferate around the globe, a number of companies have been developing apps designed to take the shopping experience to the next level by tapping into the devices' numerous location-sensing capabilities. It's early days yet, but there is reason to believe that shopping apps—whether they're used to drive foot traffic or deliver personalized service — are going to change the way consumers approach retail.

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## Location, location, location ... apps

According to the latest statistics, there are nearly half a billion smartphones in the world. "The next five years are going to produce as many changes in retail as the last 100 years," says Cyriac Roeding, CEO of Palo Alto, California-based shopkick. The company currently owns the largest location-based shopping app (also named *shopkick*) that has three million active users. It claims to have driven more than US\$110 million in sales revenues to its partner retailers by the end of 2011.

With a partner list that includes Toys 'R' Us, Best Buy, Crate&Barrel and Target, and brand partners Disney, Hasbro, Kraft Foods, Unilever and Proctor & Gamble, shopkick is poised to be the predominate player in the largest segment of the shopping-app market primarily concerned with driving traffic through reward-and-discount opportunities.

"The role of the store is completely changing," says Roeding. "Consumers no longer need the stores to be warehouses with shelves and items they can throw in a basket. They have Amazon for that. Now, they can use the power of smartphones to make their experience in the store a better one."

Steve Sorge, CEO of Toronto, Canada-based Mobile Fringe, agrees that the shopping app will be transformative for all tiers of retail. "Marketers are beginning to realize

that whatever they are doing, it needs to use all available channels—offline, online, digital and mobile," he says. "There is nothing more personal than a cellphone, so it can become a really powerful tool."

Mobile Fringe began developing shopping apps as early as 2008 and has since created *Push a Deal*, an app that utilizes new location-based phone capabilities and forwards coupons and deals to shoppers who are in the vicinity of a particular retail location.

"It works really well for food and beverage deals," says Sorge. "It's immediate."

Starting in Toronto, Mobile Fringe has plans to roll the app out to other Canadian cities this year. "Location-based technology is so powerful because if you know a person is in your mall, for instance, you can send them information that will help improve their shopping experience," he says. "I see 2012 as a year when property managers will continue looking for mobile tools to make the in-mall experience special."

Roeding's *shopkick* also values location information, but in a different way, using another business model. The company partners with retailers and rewards users just for walking into individual store locations. As well, once a user is in a store, a tab can be accessed in the app that lists sales, deals and the top-200 items in a particular location.

Extra rewards, or "kicks," can be earned by simply scanning a barcode of a featured item with a smartphone. The kicks earned can then be redeemed for real items such as gift cards, digital downloads or even charitable donations. The value of the bonus depends on the retailer. For instance, 500 kicks earns an individual a US\$2.00 gift certificate at Best Buy. Additionally, the app doles out exclusive offers for 10% off purchases made in certain categories. Kicks flow freely, with offers regularly updated, and a recent promo with US youth-targeted network The CW even rewarded in-store consumers for watching specific commercials on-air.

Interestingly, the company has also developed its own technology that is more effective than GPS for pinpointing the location of its users. "The error radius of GPS technology on mobile phones is about 500 yards when you first open an app," Roeding



Mobile Fringe's *Push a Deal* app sends coupons directly to customers while they shop

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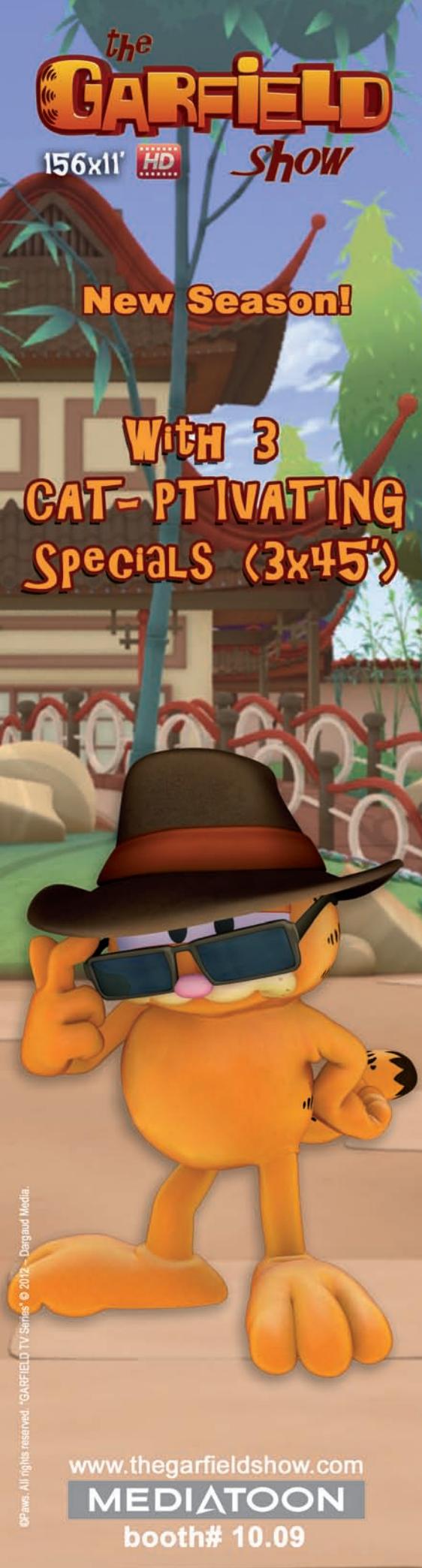


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says. "If you're the CMO of a retailer, you don't want to invest in rewarding people in your parking lot—or worse, while they're next door shopping at a competitor."

The proprietary technology emits an inaudible sound from a device located within the store and can verify if a user is in-store and reward and communicate with them accordingly.

Roeding says that *shopkick* will succeed where other location-based apps fail because it's not trying to court the social networking cohort. It is purely a commerce-driven experience. "It's our belief that the leap from social to commerce is a really hard one," he says. "That is why Facebook deals shut down within six months. Social should only be a means to make shopping a better experience."

### Experiential apps

Another approach to the shopping app market is one that concentrates more on consumers' in-store experiences, rather than purely driving foot traffic to outlets.

San Francisco, California-based Signature has built a platform that helps retailers serve specific customer needs. "Our target segment is what we call experiential—price is a secondary consideration behind brand and experience with a sales associate," says David Hegarty, CEO of Signature. "Our research has shown that this segment is very driven by personal relationships, so that is where we put our efforts."

**"The role of the store is completely changing. Consumers no longer need stores to be warehouses...They have Amazon for that...The next five years are going to produce as many changes in retail as the last 100 have."**

- Cyriac Roeding, *shopkick*

The Signature app can be downloaded free by customers onto their iPhones, iPads or iPods and will send notifications of what is new in stock, and what items are currently popular. The point of differentiation is that it will also allow customers to communicate with a specific salesperson, and find out if that salesperson is currently in the customer's chosen location. On the other hand, it allows the salesperson to access detailed information about specific customers, including what they have purchased in the past and what kinds of goods they might desire.

"We use a combination of GPS and WiFi to recognize when a customer comes into the store, and then our app becomes context-aware and alerts the consumer to areas in the store where items that they have shown a preference for are located."

Currently, Signature has a handful of retail partners—the most prominent being upscale US department store chain Neiman Marcus. Hegarty says that the app will work best in higher-end retail space and foresees children's retailers like Gymboree and Pottery Barn Kids as being ideal locations for the app in the kids space.

### The future

While retailers sort through the different mobile strategies that best suit their needs, one thing is clear—the shopping-app market is fertile ground for innovation and growth.

"I think in Q3 and Q4 this year, we will see a huge growth in mobile commerce," says Sorge. "It is the blending of the e-commerce world and the mobile world."

Roedings agrees. "Mobile will be the number-one marketing medium for physical retailers, period," he says. "Stores now have the ability to provide customers with a rewarding, interactive experience....It's a tremendous opportunity." **K**

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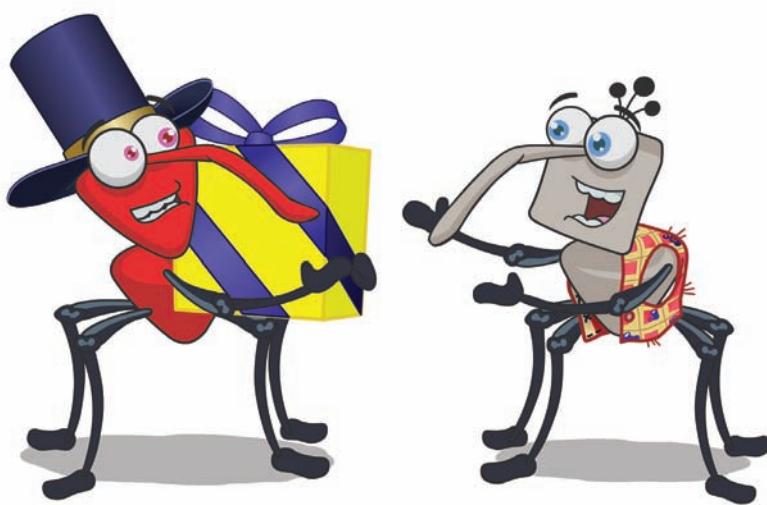
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## BinLicensing

UK virtual world *BinWeevils* looks to capitalize on slow-and-steady audience build

**T**he evolution of UK-based online community *BinWeevils* has been steady and measured, and you can expect its nascent licensing program to follow suit.

"We are in this for the long game," says co-founder and director Amelia Johnson. "We have grown organically throughout, and we are going to be strategic about licensing."

As an interstitial series, *BinWeevils* started airing on Nickelodeon UK in 2008, but it soon morphed into an online community/virtual world for kids ages six to 11. Making the online platform more robust, an innovative VOD option was added to the site in 2011 and drew attention from Cartoon Network, Nickelodeon UK and a handful of select indie producers. The content owners partnered with the site, providing *BinWeevil* subscribers with access to more than 200 hours of programming. The subscribers could then view the content and discuss it on the site through their chosen avatars with other members.

The successful merging of entertainment concepts is evident in *BinWeevils*' metrics. The site welcomes two million unique visitors a month and session times average 26 minutes.

"We have an audience we are talking to on a daily basis," says Johnson. "The audience itself is actually driving our approach."

According to Johnson, that strategy has always included a licensing program. With the help of consultant John Vasta, former licensing director at Nickelodeon Consumer Products UK, *BinWeevils* has already signed three tent-pole licensees and will be looking to roll out a robust consumer products program over the next few years.

"The tent-poles for us were book publishing with Macmillan, magazines with Egmont and master toy with Character Options," says Johnson.

Books from Macmillan were the first products to test retail waters in late 2011, and as inaugural issue of *BinWeevil* magazine bowed in February. The toys, for their part, will hit mass retailers in the UK this fall.

Johnson is particularly jazzed to be working with Character Option, owing to its success with preschool property Peppa Pig and boys action IP Ben 10, which has a similar demographic target as *BinWeevils*.

Deals are also signed (but not announced yet) for trading cards, apparel, back-to-school goods and housewares, all of which will likely be available in UK stores next year.

Now Johnson is rounding out the program for secondary categories with a hunt for greeting cards, novelty, costumes and toiletries licensees, but she says the company is in no hurry to completely blow out every category.

"There is lots of interest in the brand," she says. "We want to be careful to work with the right partners and be sure that the creative aspect is fully realized."

Along with the licensing program, *BinWeevils* will also be looking to launch a US site this year after months of successful Beta testing. —Gary Rusak

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## Licensee Lowdown

# More than a movie ticket—a new collectible gathers steam

**Who** L.A.-based Hollywood Archives Collectibles created the first mass-market Senitype collectible in 1996 for Warner Bros.' 25th anniversary release of the Bruce Lee classic *Enter the Dragon*. (A Senitype begins with the selection of a single frame of film that is digitally scanned and then reproduced onto art paper using proprietary imaging and printing techniques.) "They came to us and they wanted something different to put in a VHS box set at the time," says William Gardner, VP of business development. "We shrunk down the original [large-format pieces] and basically created a new mass-market collectible." Since then, the company has inked partnership deals with many of the major studios and created numerous items for home entertainment releases, as well as special home entertainment editions.



**What** With the advent of online movie ticket purchases, Senitype has moved beyond its original collectibles market to offer the Senitype Collectible Movie Ticket. "The first one we did was for *Thor* last spring," says Gardner. "It was really successful, so we followed that up with *Captain America*."

Each individual Senitype Collectible Movie Ticket is numbered and contains an embedded 35mm film frame from the movie. The physical item is delivered to the customer and includes a scratch-off code that can be entered online and redeemed for a movie ticket at participating theaters. The collectible is 3.5" x 5" in size and includes officially sanctioned artwork from the film. There is also a limited run of each ticket, numbered accordingly. Each movie ticket Senitype sells for the cost of the movie featured (approximately US\$12) plus an additional US\$3.

Usually the product is available up to 120 days prior to the movie's release and delivered to the customer six weeks out. The collectible aspect of the ticket is such that many consumers don't redeem the actual movie ticket, preferring to leave the collectible ticket unmarked. "They have become very sought after," says Gardner. "There is actually a larger secondary market on eBay and Amazon. They are traded and sold for much more than their original value."

**Latest Innovation** With an eye towards blockbuster movie franchises and cult favorites, the next major releases set to receive the Senitype Collectible Movie Ticket treatment are Marvel's *The Avengers* (May 4) and the *The Amazing Spider-Man* (July 3). "We have long-term relationships with all the studios," says Gardner. "The biggest challenge for us is finding the right property and making sure the artwork is of high enough quality."

**What's Next** While the distribution of the tickets thus far has been mostly online with some displays in theaters, Gardner believes that the growing popularity of the program will necessitate a change in distribution strategy. "Music retailer HMV in Canada is currently the only retailer running an in-store display," he says. "But we are working on expanding that."

**Contact** William Gardner, VP of business development (818-982-7400, [wgardner@senitype.com](mailto:wgardner@senitype.com))  
—Gary Rusak



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# Tablets trump at New York Toy Fair

**O**ne thing was clear at the Javits Convention Center in New York during Toy Fair this February—the race is on for toycos as they try to create the go-to Android tablet for kids and their parents.

According to the newest numbers from Boston Massachusetts-based research firm Strategy Analytics, the overall global tablet market is growing exponentially, from 18.6 million units shipped in 2010 to 66.9 million units shipped in 2011. The data also shows the Android platform steadily gaining market share, accounting for 29% of tablets sold in 2010 and moving up to 40% in 2011. So it stands to reason that creating a well-priced kid-friendly Android tablet might be a lucrative endeavor.

Add to the brew the ongoing popularity of Leapfrog's tablet-like LeapPad and Toys 'R' Us exclusive and holiday bestseller—the under-powered, but still popular Android-based Nabi tablet—and you start to see the where the hole in the market lies. There seems to be a real paucity of high-powered, yet kid-friendly Android tablets that are robust enough to fulfill parents' hardware needs and budget requirements. Those in the toy business already know kids are using their parents' tablets, as was evidenced by the spate of app-related toy add-ons that pretty much blanketed Toy Fair last month in New York, including multiple lines from the likes of Hasbro and Mattel. So the timing might just be right for the emergence of the elusive "killer tab," one designed with kids' developmental needs in mind, but with enough firepower to work for adults, too.

The pull is so great that Portland, Oregon-based Oregon Scientific, a technological instrument company with a history of producing kid-friendly playthings, has entered the fray with its Meep! tablet. The seven-inch Android tablet comes housed in a protective silicon rubber sleeve.

"Meep! is not just a piece of hardware," says Sebastian Domingues, senior product manager at Oregon Scientific. "It comes with a very specific user interface—its own ecosystem."

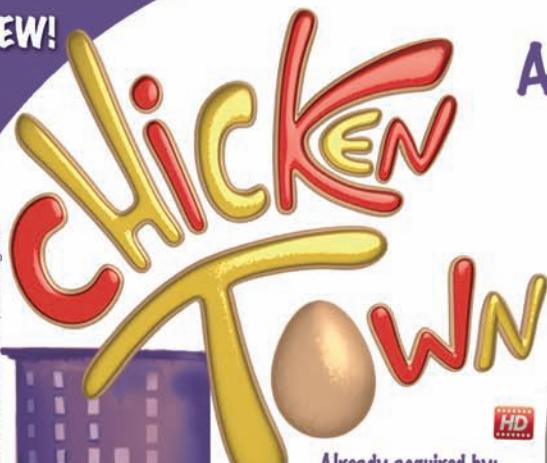
With a target demo of six- to 10-year-olds, Domingues says that the biggest challenge in developing the device was making the user interface appropriate for kids while instituting some control over what he calls "the Wild West" of apps currently available for the operating system.



Oregon Scientific's new Android-based Meep! tab offers full computing power and parental controls

NEW!

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Already acquired by:  
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Canal+ Poland, MNCTV,  
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39x8' already available  
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# Twinkle Toes

The Movie  
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This Summer



For Worldwide Licensing Paul Flett  
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For Creative Development Kristen Van Cott  
+1.310.406.0578 Email: [kristenv@skechers.com](mailto:kristenv@skechers.com)

The parental controls are managed through the Cloud, which Domingues says is a key component of the device. "Parents never have to take the tablet from the hands of their children to set up controls," he says. "Meep! belongs to kids."

Through a dedicated website, however, parents have complete control over what content the device can access, and can set all internet and micro-transaction parameters.

The device, which is also WiFi-enabled with 4GB of storage space that can be expanded to 64GB with a media card, should be ready to ship to US retailers in August. There is also a G-sensor that will ensure the image on-screen always appears the right way up. A number of accessories including musical instruments that can be plugged right into the device will also be available in the coming months. Meep! will retail for US\$199, and Oregon Scientific expects to have both mass-market and specialty retail distribution.

"I think the ideal price point is the range we're proposing for Meep!," says Domingues. "This isn't another 'fake' tablet. This is the real deal. Our technical specifications compete with tablets made for adults, if not better them."

Authenticity was also a chief concern for Hong Kong-based Techno Source when it entered into an agreement with French company CIDE Interactive to bring the Android tablet Kurio 7 to North America.

Eric Levin, division head at Techno Source, says kids will be attracted to the Kurio because it is a real tablet, not a dumbed-down iteration for children. He points to the disappearance of many kid-versioned electronics once manufactured by juvenile products companies, including toycos. That it's becoming tougher to find kid-targeted MP3 players and the like at retail, he views as proof that the demo simply isn't looking for or buying second-rate technology anymore.

"They want the real thing," Levin says. "If they get anything less, they know it right away. Retail isn't really carrying the 'youth electronics' category anymore because they feel counterfeit to kids. They find them disingenuous."

As with the Meep!, the Kurio7 will have kid-friendly programming and include a Flash drive, HDMI output and expandable memory.

"We have made the navigation seamless and all-encompassing," Levin says. "To some, those design aspects might not seem like a lot, but I think a company like Apple has proven that they are indeed very important. It's made to feel like one operating system, not one placed on top of another."

The device itself can store up to eight different profiles and allows parents to control each one in terms of permissible websites and app purchases. And it even has a timer application that can specify the tablet's hours of use. For in-

**"[Kids] want the real thing...retail isn't carrying the 'youth electronics' category anymore because they feel counterfeit to kids—they find them disengenuous."**

—Eric Levin, Techno Source

stance, for an eight-year-old's profile, a parent could set the timer to shut the device off at 7 p.m. every evening.

"Parents can have complete control all the time," says Levin. Additionally, Techno Source is curating an app store for the device. So far, it has more than 4,000 available apps that it has screened and tested.

The tablet received heavy accolades at the Nuremberg and London Toy Fairs earlier this year, and Levin expects full mass-market retail distribution when it starts shipping in May. Complete with a durable bumper case, the seven-inch version will retail for US\$199. There are also eight-inch and 10-inch versions, with the largest one maxing out at an SRP of US\$329. —Gary Rusak

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LynxSquare is based on the concept of shared consumption

## E-tailer banks on sharing

An Austin, Texas-based startup is bringing the collaborative consumption model used most effectively by Zipcar to the videogame and textbook space.

“Why can’t we purchase an item with a friend and split the cost?” This is the question that inspired the launch of LynxSquare, which grew out of the Austin Technology Incubator at the University of Texas.

“When you go to GameStop and purchase a videogame it costs US\$60,” says co-founder and CEO Zul Momin. “Then you use it for a few weeks and trade it back to them for US\$17. You can see that the customer is losing a lot of money there.”

LynxSquare allows customers to make the same purchase of a videogame, but split the price with another user, who they can find through branded applications embedded in Twitter or Facebook. Additionally, the LynxSquare Friendsheet lets members search for other members to split the cost of an item. (The ratio of the split is pre-determined and agreed upon by up to three members.) For instance, the person who gets first crack at the game can agree to pay 60%, while the next in line can pay the other 40%. The site also has an option for selling items so groups can recoup their initial investments. The shared-purchase software is proprietary, and LynxSquare has secured its US patent and filed one for international use.

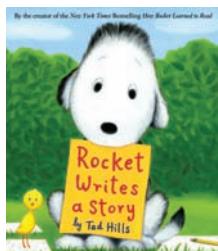
Membership to the site ([www.lynxsquare.com](http://www.lynxsquare.com)) is free. However all purchases are subject to a 12% service charge.

“We provide the platform for people to share,” says co-founder and COO Ahmed Moledina. “My kids play a game and they get sick and tired of it in a month. We have developed this platform so they can share that cost now.”

Currently in Beta testing, there are plans to have the site fully realized in the next three months. With links to online retailers like Amazon and Barnes & Noble, Momin predicts there will be upwards of 16 million products available, with a heavy emphasis on books (the informal practice of sharing textbooks was another impetus for the idea) and videogames.

There is also an environmental angle to the business, says Moledina. “Multiple buyers means that there are less products to fill landfills,” he says. “The sharing itself will cut down on waste.” –Gary Rusak

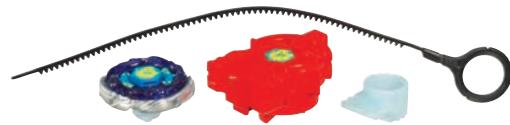
## BookBet Rocket Writes a Story



The follow-up to 2010 New York Times bestseller *How Rocket Learned to Read*, follows the titular character, a little yellow bird, as he searches for creative inspiration. For kids four to eight, picture book, *Rocket Writes a Book*, is designed to impart the wonder of observation to its audience. In his search for a story to tell, Rocket discovers that the necessary elements are actually right under his beak. Owing to the success of the first title, publisher Random House is starting off with a 100,000-copy run, hitting retail on July 24. Author and illustrator Tad Hills will also partake in a national book tour this fall to promote the release. –Gary Rusak

## TopToys

France (February)



1

Beyblade Metal Fusion  
(Hasbro)



2

Cars Characters mini asst.  
(Mattel)



3

Zhu Zhu Hamster  
(Giocchi Preziosi)



4

Beyblade Duel asst.  
(Hasbro)



5

Football 2012 blister pack  
(Panini)

Source: NPD EuroToys EPoS panel, France (February 2012, covering 69% of sales in value)



# The new digital mom

**While they've got the buzz, Twitter and other burgeoning social platforms don't really rate when it comes to reaching this generation of totally wired moms. So what does? Through a new proprietary study, youth and family promo agency Strottman International clues us into the types of digital marketing communications most likely to resonate with modern US mothers.**

BY BRADY DARVIN

**It**

would be a gross understatement to say that the digital media landscape is changing the way today's Gen X and Millennial moms and their kids connect with friends, family, brands and entertainment. Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, mommy blogs, smartphones, iPads...the list of platforms and devices influencing the media usage of these demos just keeps growing. And while there exists a significant body of syndicated research on digital media usage, when it comes to focusing on moms and young kids, that seeming flood of information quickly turns to a trickle, with kids often being broadly defined as anyone under age 18.

So it's no wonder that when designing a digital promotional campaign for a new product or property, brand owners can easily get excited by a pitch that invokes the latest (and hippest) social media platforms out there, even though there's little data available to support the plan. "Let's give away prizes to moms who tweet the best photos of their kids using [the client's products]" or "Let's recruit 200 influential mommy bloggers to watch our new TV series with their child and then blog about it" might, in fact, just wow them in the boardroom. But pulling the trigger on campaigns like these without knowing whether or not your target is actually using Twitter or reading blogs is the digital equivalent of making a random scatter-buy of television ad time.

And that's where this study comes in handy. In an effort to better understand its core target customers—moms of kids ages three to nine, and the kids themselves—Strottman International designed and conducted a proprietary study earlier this year to help better understand the attitudes toward, and usage of, a variety of digital media among these groups. Our goal was to better prioritize which types of digital communications would be

most likely to reach and resonate with this group of consumers. To get there, we surveyed a nationally representative sample of 1,043 moms with at least one child in the three to nine bracket, who also said they spent at least one hour per week using the internet. The resulting questionnaire contained sections on hardware ownership and internet usage, social media and blog use, and smartphone/mobile app usage.

### They're not afraid of technology

While a trip the local Best Buy outlet might still lead you to believe that men are more likely than women to fit the "gadget geek" stereotype, don't let that fool you into thinking today's moms aren't tech-savvy. In terms of the devices they own, how frequently they use them, and how comfortable they feel using them, today's Millennial and GenX moms are totally wired. A full 94% of moms surveyed classify themselves as "comfortable with using technology, such as computers, MP3 players and smartphones," with 73% saying they are "very comfortable."

Strottman's data indicates that by the end of 2012, about two-thirds of moms with kids ages three to nine will own an Apple or Android-based smartphone. Even among households with a total annual income under US\$50,000, more than half will own smartphones by year's end. However, tablet ownership rates will take a bit longer to catch up, with about half of moms from higher-income households possessing a tablet before the end of this year, versus roughly one-third from under-US\$50,000 households. With the flood of sub-US\$250 Android-powered tablets introduced at the Consumer Electronics Show in January, tablet ownership could be achieved by a majority of this mom demo by the end of 2013, if not earlier.

While moms reported spending an average of 14 hours a week online, using a desktop or laptop computer (NOT including time spent on email), half of this group said their three- to nine-year-old children spend only two hours a week or less online with them or another adult, and almost no time online by themselves.

### Social means Facebook and not much else

Though "social media" has been the buzz phrase for the past two years, good old email still wins hands down with moms as the digital platform with the most reach. Nine out of 10 moms said they check their non-work-related email at least once a day, and 33% read an email from a

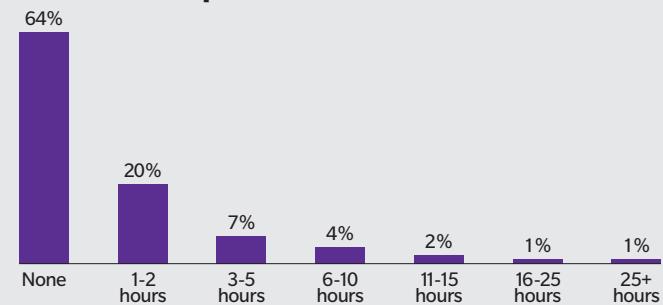
### The trouble with Twitter—and mommy blogs, for that matter

Twitter might be the best way for The Kardashians or Anderson Cooper to stay in touch with their fans, but it's NOT the best way for marketers to reach moms with young children. Among moms who use any kind of social media, a full two-thirds said they didn't use Twitter at all. With the remaining one-third who do use Twitter, 66% are passive users, meaning they read other people's tweets, but never tweet or re-tweet themselves, which negates one of the site's key functions—communicating with, and subsequently influencing, followers.

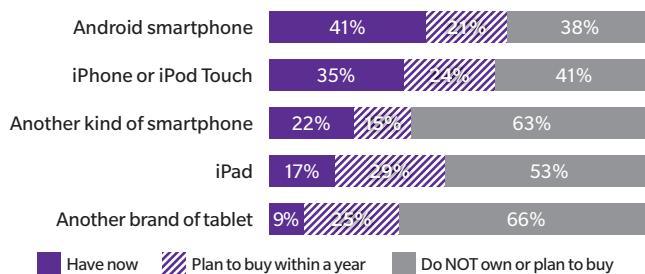
Similarly, and somewhat surprisingly given the media attention garnered recently by some "mommy bloggers," four out of 10 moms surveyed by Strottman said they NEVER read (or write their own) blogs, and only 10% are heavy blog users. Among the 60% who do use blogs, less than half of this group have ever tried creating their own blog, and only 5% post to their own blog multiple times per week.

It may be that the efforts of a small number of mommy bloggers who are trying to turn their blogs into full-time, income-generating occupations and have made a lot of media noise in doing so, have given some marketers the impression that they are the voice to which today's average moms are listening. Witness the BlogHer convention that took place last August in San Diego, California. More than 3,000 self-proclaimed mommy bloggers found themselves being wooed by many of the largest retailers and CPG brands in the US. Such commercialization of blogging, combined with stricter enforcement of FCC regulations that require paid bloggers to disclose any compensation they've received, has no doubt affected the credibility of the medium. —Brady Darvin

### Hours per week moms use Twitter



### Moms and smartphone/tablet ownership



brand or retailer each day, too. On average moms have signed up to receive emails from six brands or retailers, plus another three from restaurants. This group prefers to get emails from brands no more than once a week, and they expect: customized missives based on individual

location or personal preferences; coupons and deals; and information about new products before it's made public, so they can be the first to know and share with their friends.

As for those of-the-minute social media platforms, when it comes to moms of young kids, relative old-timer Facebook rules. The average mom spends about 7.5 hours a week at home using social media (with 22% spending more than 10 hours

### Email

- There is no single better way to reach moms
- Moms expect emails customized to them
- The best email is one moms will want to forward to someone else

## Social media

- For moms, marketers' efforts are best spent focusing on Facebook (for now)
- Facebook deals/ coupons are important, but are only a "cost of entry"
- Moms see Facebook as a way to be the first to know about new products, sweepstakes, etc.
- Moms use Facebook to gauge whether or not a brand is listening to them

a week), and almost 100% of that time is devoted to Facebook with a little bit of YouTube thrown in. In this instance, 86% of our respondents said they used Facebook regularly, and 55% said they used YouTube regularly. The next most popular sites in this category included retail-deal networks Groupon and Living Social, with 36% and 19% of moms, respectively, frequenting them.

Beyond these sites, social media usage appears minimal and scattered. Even headline-grabbing location-based social networks such as Foursquare and SCVNGR were not on moms' radars, with less than 3% saying they had used either one.

And what of Twitter? It's undeniable that the site is helping to drive the culture of celebrity gossip, and tweeting has become wildly popular among the college crowd in the US. But when it comes to today's American moms, there's just not much tweeting going on—or blogging, either (see sidebar p.61).

ularity when it comes to moms communicating not only with their friends and family, but also brands, is easy to understand—moms want two-way communication with marketers. This group wants to ask questions, be heard and share their opinions in real time—and Facebook presents the ideal platform for this interaction, far superior to any traditional website.

Some of the same tenets that apply to good email marketing also apply to Facebook. Brands and property owners should use the site to offer exclusive discounts and news, and to solicit consumer feedback. Perhaps most importantly, marketers need to demonstrate their appreciation of such feedback (positive or negative) by responding to consumers quickly (i.e. within 24 hours). It's arguably worse to create a great Facebook page that doesn't promptly respond to consumer comments and complaints than it is to have no presence on the site at all. Meeting moms' expectations of two-way communication

## "Don't drop it!" Kids' usage of smartphones

Strottman's survey also asked moms to estimate how much time their three- to nine-year-olds were spending with mom's smartphone and/or tablet. One out of four moms said they hand their smartphone over to their children less than once a month. On the other end of the spectrum, 20% said they did so at least once a day.

Why such a disparity? Many moms said they feel that their kids already get "too much screen time" between regular computer usage, video game playing and TV watching, and do not want to fill more of their children's downtime with what is usually a "heads-down," isolating experience. In addition, while smartphone prices have dropped dramatically in the last two years, they're still costly to replace, and some moms simply don't want their five-year-old's peanut butter-laden hands all over their pristine iPhones, and they certainly don't want it to slip out of those dirty mitts. Finally, there is still a relative shortage of high-quality, free kids apps available, especially for the Android platform. The survey indicated that 40% of moms have NEVER paid for an app of any kind, and not every mom wants their child endlessly repeating levels of *Angry Birds* that they haven't yet mastered.

Never fear. Consumer electronics manufacturers are on the case. The latest generation of mobile devices designed specifically for kids—such as the Android-based VINCI and Nabi tablets, which have integrated rubber bumper cases and a slew of pre-loaded apps designed for kids—address all of Mom's objections (except the concern over too much screen time exposure). Undoubtedly, mobile device usage among young kids will grow dramatically over the next year. —Brady Darvin



## Mobile apps

Moms like and use apps that:

- Give them the info they want instantly
- Provide coupons and deal alerts
- Entertain them or their child
- Make something they already do easier

Facebook is not only the top social media activity moms engage in at home, it's also the number-one app they access on their smartphones. Of the moms with smartphones surveyed, 58% said they used the mobile version of the social network at least daily—that's even more than they use their smartphones to check the weather!

The popularity of Facebook, both at home and on the go, offers marketers the potential to reach moms everywhere they are—easily surpassing a brand's or property's regular website as the first place moms go when they want more information or news. The reason for Facebook's pop-

ularity when it comes to moms communicating not only with their friends and family, but also brands, is easy to understand—moms want two-way communication with marketers. This group wants to ask questions, be heard and share their opinions in real time—and Facebook presents the ideal platform for this interaction, far superior to any traditional website.

Brady Darvin is VP of consumer insights at Strottman International ([www.strottman.com](http://www.strottman.com)), the leading full-service youth and family marketing agency that develops hands-on (physical and virtual) brand experiences for major retailers to build loyalty among kids and families. You can reach him at [darvin@strottman.com](mailto:darvin@strottman.com).



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# Wired to talk

**nickelodeon**  
**KALEIDOSCOPE**  
REFLECTING TRENDS...TODAY AND TOMORROW

Technology is powering a lot of this generation's social interactions. Nick takes a look at how this constant connectivity is affecting the way kids communicate right now.

BY ERIN MILLER

**T**he Connected Generation. Gen We. These are amongst the names coined for to this yet-to-be-labeled upcoming generation. While an official moniker does not exist, the common thread that seems to be a defining feature of this generation is that they are growing up more connected and plugged in than any of their predecessors. For this Kaleidoscope study, we wanted to dive deeply into how kids' and teens' constant connectivity affects the way they communicate with each other and with their families.

From a developmental standpoint, we know how important it is for kids and teens to create and maintain social relationships. Beginning in elementary school and growing stronger as they get older, today's youth craves peer interaction, and they'll go to great lengths to meet this important developmental need. Technology has given kids and teens new ways to be perma-connected to their friends, across platforms, 24/7. While six- and seven-year-olds aren't yet experiencing the need for peer communication beyond planning the occasional play date, the shift that takes place once a child turns eight years old is significant.

The ability to communicate with others has become imbedded in so much of what kids already do, from gaming to websites and mobile. The chat feature function, which seems to be popping up in so many websites and games they access, is a big contributor to connectivity and is increasingly becoming an expected feature of kids' digital experiences. The majority of respondents in this study own their own cell phone, so it's no surprise that they're accessing tools such as text, video chat and Facebook to communicate on the go. Even if kids don't have a cell phone, they're still able to access several method of communication through devices like the iPod Touch. Texting, meanwhile, has become one of the main modes of communication for tweens and teens. To that point, our respondents are engaging in a range of conversations, managing challenging situations and displaying an array of emotions through text messaging. In fact, texting has become the perfect safeguard for dealing with difficult, awkward situations. Taking in-person interaction out of the equation could be a new norm for this group.

While boys and girls universally embrace texting, there are some gender differences that stood out when it comes to communicating. Coming as no surprise, girls feel the need to be in constant contact with their social groups and seem to be engaged in more communicating overall across more platforms. While many boys do like to maintain social interactions, they don't express the same need that girls do. Another way boys are communicating is through multi-player gaming on consoles such as Xbox 360, PSP3 and



Nintendo Wii. Interestingly, boys are often engaging in this type of communication mindlessly and having conversations well beyond game play. Video chatting has also been on the rise, and our respondents are tapped into the various video options at their fingertips, such as Skype, Tango, FaceTime and ooVoo. Not only has video chat given kids a way to easily "hang out" without being in the same room, but it's opened up a new realm of family communication. Kids and teens are often engaging in video chats with relatives, near and far, and it's becoming a shared family activity in the home.

Despite all this talk of kids and teens being constantly connected, it was refreshing to hear from our respondents that they still value face-to-face communication with friends and family. An important thing to remember is that kids continue to interact every day with peers, teachers, coaches and parents in person. While tech devices may be enabling them to create extensions of these relationships, kids understand that no device can replace certain emotions or reactions that happen in person. **k**

**Having gained a better understanding of how kids and teens are communicating today, next month's Kaleidoscope report will take a deeper look at communication from a parent's perspective, as well as how social media plays out in the communication equation.**

**For more information, contact [Kaleidoscope@nick.com](mailto:Kaleidoscope@nick.com)**

(Source: Nickelodeon Consumer Insights, February 2012; Qualitative sample size: N = 80 kids ages 6 to 15.)

A major focus of the Brand and Consumer Insights Department at Nickelodeon Kids & Family is to live and breathe kid culture. We continually track and identify trends, and explore what it means to be a kid and teen today. In an effort to keep you in touch with our audience and give a voice to our consumer, we've created the Nickelodeon Kaleidoscope. Every month, Kaleidoscope will capture key areas of interest across the kid and family cultural landscape, provide an understanding of attitudes and behaviors, and report on trends and buzz.

## Muse of the Month

# Notes from the underground

This month's installment is written by our muse herself, Sofiy. The 13-year-old from Brooklyn, New York shares how she found community and a sense of purpose.



In January 2007, brothers John and Hank Green decided to stop communicating through anything text-based and instead began communicating through YouTube videos. Soon a community sprung up around their videos called Nerdfighteria. I have been a Nerdfighter since 2009, and there are about 500,000 others like me.

The fun thing about Nerdfighteria is that it's not just a community, it's a lifestyle. We have special phrases, like

DFTBA, which stands for Don't Forget to Be Awesome. But we're not all fun and awesomeness—we also work to decrease Worldsuck, which is everything that is unfair in the world. The Nerdfighter charity, Project for Awesome (P4A), has so far raised over US\$100,000 for charities like Water.org, The Make A Wish Foundation and Toys for Tots.

I am proud of how much money we raised as a community, but I know being a Nerdfighter is just one piece of the puzzle. Nerdfighteria is about knowing that someone knows just as much Doctor Who trivia as you do, and then, through the magic of the internet, you can talk to them.

A few weeks ago, I went to a bookstore and picked up a copy of John Green's *An Abundance of Katherines*. I opened the cover to find a post-it note stuck to the first page. It read: "If you are reading this note, you are probably a Nerdfighter. It's totally OK. Go to [www.youtube.com/vlogbrothers](http://www.youtube.com/vlogbrothers) for more info. DFTBA!"

Perhaps more strangers will get notes in books and more people will feel like they belong to something important.



Insight Kids is a research-driven strategy firm that inspires its clients to build innovative and impactful experiences for kids and families. For more information find us at [www.insightkids.com](http://www.insightkids.com) and [www.insightstrategygroup.com](http://www.insightstrategygroup.com)

## Cool or Not? The digital games edition

Boys 8 to 11 (202)	Girls 8 to 11 (206)	Boys 12 to 15 (230)	Girls 12 to 15 (213)		Boys 8 to 11 (198)	Girls 8 to 11 (142)	Boys 12 to 15 (107)	Girls 12 to 15 (88)
50%	46.6%	32.2%	36.2%	<b>Totally way cool *</b>	45.5%	25.4%	11.2%	8%
19.8%	19.4%	22.6%	20.7%	<b>Very cool *</b>	10.6%	9.2%	11.2%	4.5%
21.3%	18%	34.8%	30.5%	<b>Kinda cool *</b>	18.2%	19%	17.8%	22.7%
2.5%	4.4%	4.8%	8.5%	<b>Not cool *</b>	5.6%	13.4%	19.6%	21.6%
6.4%	11.7%	5.7%	4.2%	<b>Totally un-cool *</b>	20.2%	33.1%	40.2%	43.2%
20.8%	20.2%	9.1%	15.8%	<b>Don't know what it is</b>	22.7%	43.9%	56.9%	65.1%

\* Excludes "Don't know what it is" responses



Cool or Not? is part of KidSay's February/March 2012 Trend Tracker. These one-of-a-kind research reports are published 10 times a year and provide a quantitative and qualitative picture of kids' likes, dislikes and trends gathered through in-school surveys with US kids ages five to 15. Contact Bob Reynolds (913-390-8110 or [bob@kidsay.com](mailto:bob@kidsay.com)).



**Skylanders**

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Canadian companies Shaftesbury, Smokebomb and XMG claim to have the first app series in tween-skewing *Totally Amp'd*

# Amped storytelling

**Original live-action sitcom created specifically as a mobile app taps into transmedia and gamification trends to offer tweens a new way to consume content**

BY JEREMY DICKSON

**I**t was really only a matter of time before an enterprising person or company created an app-based, interactive series for today's on-the-go tweens. And sure enough, Toronto, Canada-based prodco Shaftesbury Films and its digital media arm, Smokebomb Entertainment is claiming to be the first. The companies launched *Totally Amp'd* globally on January 26 on Apple's App Store as a free download for iPad, iPhone and iTouch devices.

Published by XMG Studios (an independent developer of videogames for mobile devices in Toronto) and starring Ashley Leggat (*Life with Derek*) and Cristine Prosperi (*Degrassi: The Next Generation*), the series consists of 10 six- to nine-minute "appisodes" that combine live-action comedy with interactive, music-based activities.

And although they've stepped into uncharted waters, the teams at Smokebomb, XMG and Shaftesbury (*Baxter*, *Connor Undercover* and *Overruled!*) knew that tapping into two of the biggest trends in interactive entertainment—transmedia storytelling and gamification—was simply part of the ongoing digital evolution.

"It's very easy to look at something and say 'Wow that's innovative,' but everything sort of steps on the shoulders of what came before," says Daniel Dales, CEO at Smokebomb and the executive producer of *Totally Amp'd*.

"What we've done is part of an evolution of content that will migrate from screen to screen, but the biggest challenge for us is there is no category to put us in," Dales contends. "There is no category for short-form app series. But we would love to see more

of this world because we do think app series will become a category in and of itself."

## Tradition reimagined

Dales says rethinking what a TV series would look like as an app for a specific demographic was an exciting creative challenge that got the teams looking closely at how people consume content. "The process began in the fall of 2010, and finding the target audience was critical," he says. "Today, every teen show is online. But the tween mobile entertainment market has been underserved, so we knew this was a core audience we could attract."

And the app doesn't just stop at the scripted content. Beyond following the narrative that chronicles the trials of five teenagers who join together to form a band and win a music competition, interactive content can be unlocked in three areas—music, movie and design—once each ep is viewed. (After downloading the app, kids can watch the first ep, "Rejects Reborn," for free, and the nine additional segments can be purchased for US\$4.99.)

The music studio enables users to direct their own videos incorporating clips and songs from the series, while the movie component lets them to upload their own vocals and remix the series' original songs. In the design studio, users can craft band outfits, posters, album covers and dress up characters from the show.

Further leveraging social media, any creations made by the app's users in the interactive studios can be shared with friends on the *Totally Amp'd* Facebook page, and a bonus content tab in the app opens up walk-throughs, Q&As and additional behind-the-scenes content on the *Totally Amp'd* YouTube channel.

## Digital differences

According to Dales, the project required taking a different production approach from in a few key areas, including time compliance and budget.

To start, the shooting schedule was compressed to just six days. A traditional TV series can take up to 12 weeks to film, he notes, and the tighter production time makes it easier to schedule actors and shoot on a tight budget.

Make no mistake, producing an app with scripted live-action content is challenging financially, but Dales says they found ways to cut costs. "As a percentage, the cost of producing *Totally Amp'd* is 30% lower than a TV production of similar length," he says. "One way we maintained production efficiencies was by shooting entirely on green-screen and translight plates in studio, with background elements added in post."

In fact, many of the background elements or sets were actually hand-drawn to give the eps a unique look and feel. The series also didn't have the luxury of having a big promotional machine behind it, so marketing efforts began internally even before the series started shooting.

One of the unique ways the producers generated buzz and interest from their demographic in advance of the January launch was to enlist the services of four of the most popular young adult fiction writers from wattpad.com, an eReading publishing platform for indie writers that connects seven million users worldwide.

"We had [the writers] create backstories for each of the main characters featured in the app, and those backstories were launched on wattpad.com right before Christmas in order to maximize word of mouth about *Totally Amp'd*, and to build anticipation for the series launch," Dales says. "The stories have garnered over 23,000 reads since they rolled out."

## Key advantages

Although it's still new, Dales says the fact that *Totally Amp'd* is not your usual app should set it up for success. "We can't release our download figures yet, but we're able to confirm that the conversion rate from free to paid is much higher than for average apps, at nearly 10%," he says.

For XMG CEO Ray Sharma, the value that users get from the amount of content and interactivity in *Totally Amp'd* should also be an advantage. "We examined entertainment platforms on a 'dollars paid per hours used' equation, and concluded that the dollar value per hour that you get from mobile games is setting a precedent compared to movies, console games and cable TV," he says.

Although Sharma admits XMG, which launched in late 2009, wasn't created with a grand transmedia vision, the publisher has been able to do some innovative work, first on an app for tween/teen fave Degrassi and now *Totally Amp'd*. "We've done some things differently, and *Totally Amp'd* is getting people's attention."

According to Dales, the teams are continuing to promote the series globally and are very satisfied with its performance so far, which has exceeded their expectations. "Fan feedback has been great, especially from social media platforms including our global Facebook page, the official website, Tumblr and Twitter. It's satisfying to know how much time fans are spending with the content, re-watching the episodes and using the interactive features."

How the brand grows and whether the series will potentially incorporate a choose-your-own-adventure format remains to be seen. But moving forward, Dales says the partners are looking at ways to improve engagement, reduce the large size (925MB) of the app and the time it takes to download. "Getting content to the consumer is critically important, and the decision we made to provide all the content in one app is something we are evaluating," he says. **K**

## TechWatch Keeping an eye on the gadget scene



# Putting imagination into action

### What it is

Redwood City, California-based Roblox Corporation's user-generated gaming site Roblox.com may have found the perfect balance between keeping kids entertained and educated by giving its users tools to program and share their own video games and 3D worlds. Since its 2006 launch, Roblox is now one of the largest free-to-play MMOG communities aimed at kids ages eight to 14. With more than nine billion page views and 7.4 million unique visitors per month, including 250 million hours of game-play in 2011, Roblox is striking a chord with today's tech-savvy kids.

### How it works

Roblox features a building kit to help kids create simple games out of digital building blocks and offers scripting capabilities built on the cross-platform programming language, Lua, for kids with more advanced programming needs. Roblox also teaches entrepreneurial skills with its in-game currency Robux, which can be used to purchase new game items, or in-game ads, which kids can create to attract more players to their games.

### What it means

Perhaps the biggest reason Roblox has grown in popularity, while similar competitors like Lego Universe have failed, is its ability to give kids tools to learn skills in multiple areas including computer science, physics, business and marketing. The moderated site also provides a community where kids can learn social responsibility and teamwork on their own terms while having fun. In 2011, Roblox players built 5.4 million games, marking a 109% year-over-year increase from 2010.

# TheDigits

Numbers that speak volumes about kids and technology

On average a child spends

**11 minutes,  
40 seconds**



using mom or dad's smartphone,  
opening two apps in that time

(Famigo Family Trends in Mobile Media)

Early-learning apps designed for the  
preschool crowd experienced the  
largest growth of any category—

**23%**

—in the past two years

(The Joan Ganz Cooney Center)



**64%**

of kids ages  
eight to 12  
envision robots  
that are natural,  
human-like  
companions

(Latitude)

**77%** of US children under 12  
in tablet-owning  
households play  
downloaded games  
on the device, while **57%**  
use their tablets to access  
educational apps

(Nielsen)



Last year, the average US citizen  
over age 12 spent more than

**100 hours**

accessing content via  
wireless devices

(PQ Media)



VINCI stands apart from  
the tablet crowd as the  
only Android device made  
just for preschoolers

## New Kid in Town

# An early-learning renaissance

**The idea** When mother and telecom entrepreneur Dr. Dan D. Yang first observed her infant daughter's fascination with her iPhone in 2010, she wanted to nurture the tot's obvious interest in the device. But, Yang, who's based in Ottawa, Canada, was very concerned about its safety standards, mobility and educational value for her young child. Yang's experience with her daughter led her to examine traditional and commercial consumer products aimed at children. She concluded that the majority of products on the market didn't teach beyond ABCs and 123s and weren't meeting the educational and developmental needs of kids ages zero to four. Taking action, Yang set out to create a new category of safe, child-friendly early learning systems called VINCI (after Leonardo) and founded the startup of the same name with a personal investment of US\$10 million. Joining forces with educators, designers and developers, her team created the VINCI Tablet, a seven-inch Android-based tablet designed specifically to meet the developmental needs of preschoolers, which went on the market in August 2011.

**A tablet for tots** The resulting tablet features educational apps, games, music videos, animated storybooks and a three megapixel back-facing camera, but it has no internet access to help parents maintain a controlled environment. Its shatter-proof screen is FDA safety-compliant and the VINCI is encased in a sturdy steering-wheel-like piece of plastic, so kids can take it and use it anywhere.

Taking into consideration how difficult it can be for parents to pull age-appropriate apps from the sea that currently exists, the VINCI Tab is unique from competitors such as Fuhu's Nabi, in that its apps are designed to help kids meet developmental milestones.

**The next phase** The one major stumbling block for the VINCI Tab right now is its comparatively high price tag—it sits at US\$479 for an 8GB version (the largest hard drive in the preschool tablet market) and US\$389 for a 4GB version. But the issue is being addressed through the pre-eminent VINCI Tab M (mini), expected to hit North American retailers later this spring.

"It will have the same technical specifications as the existing tablet, but it will have a smaller five-inch screen with a border and no red handle," explains Yang. And while the price will be lower, the new mini VINCI will include apps that let kids have a multi-screen experience so they can play with their friends. Looking forward, Yang says her team is examining voice-recognition apps that enable language learning, and people have even approached her about creating a tablet that could help autistic kids. —Jeremy Dickson

# All in the family

Original ideas fuel this industry. And broadcasters and prodcos spend a lot of time in search of a good concept. But what if they regularly had to look no further than that messy cubicle just down the hall? Cultivating in-house talent never looked so good.

BY KATE CALDER

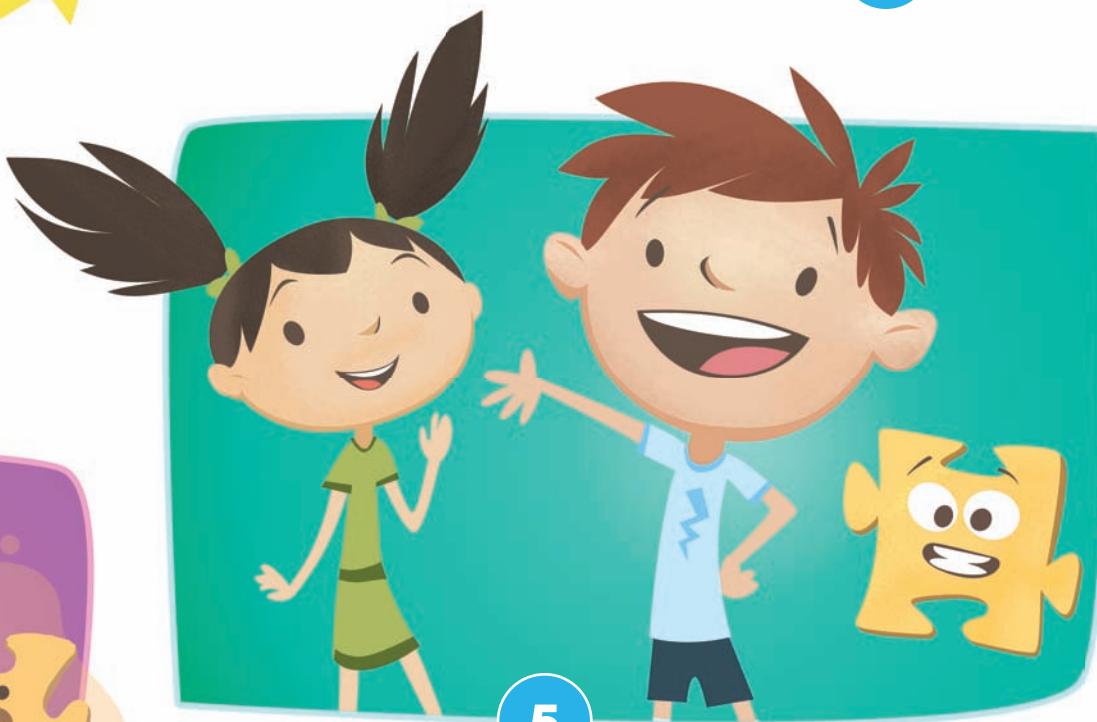


In 2007, animation shop Guru Studio asked its staff to pitch their ideas...

- 1 ...and commercial artist Brandon Scott submitted *Mike in Time*, a series idea about a young time traveller.
- 2 Guru development execs liked the concept and suggested changing the title to the clever *Justin Time*. (Initial broadcast input found Justin to be a bit too young and, oh yeah, he had to lose the overalls.)
- 3 The team thought Justin needed a friend, so Olive was born and the characters were aged up a bit.
- 4 More broadcaster input in 2009 meant finessing the character design and the addition of Wiki.
- 5 By the end of that year, the final design and concept were almost there. Wiki had been re-named Zepi, but Zepi just wasn't huggable enough.
- 6 *Justin Time* in finished ep form—Zepi is now precocious sidekick Squidgy, and the three leads have more detail and expressive faces.



6



5



Film Roman's *Dan Vs.*

**W**hen Toronto, Canada-based animation studio Guru set out to transition from a work-for-hire studio to an original series producer, its best asset turned out to be right under its own roof. An open call for pitches from Guru's animation staff uncovered the seed of an idea from resident commercial artist Brandon Scott. (Check out its development path on the opening spread, p. 66.) The company's president, Frank Falcone, and VP of development and acquisitions Mary Bredin, along with a constructive stream of broadcaster notes, worked up Scott's idea into a full-fledged series. Three years later, 26 x 11-minute preschool show *Justin Time* was delivered to Canada's Disney Junior.

"Justin is Brandon," says Bredin, adding that you can often see the creators reflected in a show's characters. In fact, *Justin* character Olive turned out to be a lot like Bredin, and sidekick Squidgy, well, he's mostly Frank.

Scott now has a "created by" credit and wears the hat of art director on the series, which is in production for a second season. The series began airing in French on Disney Junior in Canada last September and is set to bow in English this fall. Guru has also inked first-season deals with Discovery Kids Latin America, YLE (Finland), Hop! Channel (Israel) and Kids Talk Talk (Korea).

We spoke with several animation studios, big and small, that have found success in working up in-house ideas like Guru. Having an eye for spotting a diamond in the rough and the patience to give it time and attention, like *Justin Time*'s development, are key. And more often than not, unearthing great ideas goes hand-in-hand with taking a chance on fresh talent.

**Developing people** Having worked in development for more than 20 years, Film Roman GM and head of production Dana Booton shares a similar penchant for encouraging

fledgling creators to grow with their ideas. The L.A. prodcos animated series *Dan Vs.* aired on US net The Hub last year and is going into production on season three. It was the first property independent creators Dan Mandel and Chris Pearson had ever conceived, and it stars irreverent characters modeled after their own negative and comical qualities.

"The idea was so relatable that we had to invest in it and we've really pulled them into the whole process," says Booton. Having served as a writer for the first two seasons, she says Pearson has been promoted to showrunner. "I'm really big on making the creative side feel comfortable, so it's helpful to have someone in-house who is working with you on the project from concept to greenlight," she says.

Booton also says that great ideas can come in elaborately packaged pitches or scribbled on the back of a napkin. The prodcos has a project born in-house right now that came from 40 seconds of animation with a brief explanation, and another that was forwarded to her as a written proposal with no visuals whatsoever.

**Open season** "To be honest, it's not so much about the idea; it tends to be more about the people," contends Miles Bullough, head of broadcast at Bristol, UK-based Aardman Animations. "An idea without someone who can make it great is almost useless."

The company has no better example of this caveat than Nick Park, who came on-board as an animator in the 1970s and went on to spin the ideas for iconic Aardman hits *Wallace & Gromit*, *Creature Comforts* and *Shaun the Sheep*. Bullough says the longstanding relationship between Aardman and Park works well because Aardman treasures his talent and gives Park the space to focus on creative work. (Park is also a director of the company and has a stake in *Wallace & Gromit*.) Bullough says that although external writers were brought in to flesh out *Shaun*, development was kept in-house

# ZETMAN



30 min./13 eps.

© Masakazu Katsura / SHUEISHA, ZETMAN Project

# BRAVE10



30 min./12 eps.

© Kairi Shimotsuki / MEDIA FACTORY・BRAVE10 Project



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and "in essence it comes from the bosom of the Aardman family." The company took a chance on in-house animator Sergio Delfino, who pitched *Chop Socky Chooks* and eventually went on to direct the CGI series, which bowed in 2008.

Always on the lookout for that diamond in the rough, Aardman has also opened its doors over the years to pitches from external creative hopefuls, in particular animation students. In fact, Bullough says this year the company will be relaunching its Pitch Fest, an event that sees the prodco opens its doors, granting nascent creators 15-minute slots to pitch their show concepts. The goal is to make the process clear to outsiders and potentially have them join in on series development.

**Creative stakes** In the meantime, Bullough says he's open to ideas from within, but admits that it's hard to set aside time when production is in full swing. He says another ob-

**Putting your best creative forward** Pynoski says festivals are a way to build awareness for Titmouse as a studio and to connect with other artists. They also showcase the prodco's talent pool as an asset. For example, Pynoski entered *Barko*, a short film by in-house artist Allison Craig, into key festivals and is also going one step further by introducing Craig and her ideas to networks. "We use *Barko* to say, 'This is her style, this is what she can do, and this is what she can direct,'" says Pynoski. "It's a calling card for her."

Marc du Pontavice, president and CEO of Paris-based Xilam also solicits pitches from his staff. Right now he's in the process of developing a show created by two Xilam animators who had no previous experience in writing or directing. At its heart, the seemingly thin concept had the seed of a great idea and compelling design from which he could build something.



**Shaun the Sheep** (left) was conceived by long-time Aardman in-house creator Nick Park, while Titmouse uses short animated film *Barko* to showcase its studio and in-house artist and creator, Allison Craig



stacle is fear surrounding the ownership of ideas. "We have to strike a balance between insisting upon our ownership rights and rewarding someone for coming up with an idea in the first place," says Bullough. In the UK, companies own the ideas produced by staffers, but he says that Aardman works compensation and profit-sharing into the process.

For L.A.-based indie prodco Titmouse, VP and executive producer Shannon Pynoski says ownership is split with creators.

"We split the ownership and they have full control, because it's their piece. We understand that because it's where we're from, too," says Pynoski. In working to build up projects beyond their work-for-hire business, Titmouse is always scouring for fresh ideas from within. To facilitate the search, the studio has instituted something called Five Second Day. Essentially, when they can find time between production cycles, the studio shuts down its regular production and gives the animation staff a chance to work on their own shorts. When the shorts are completed, Titmouse hosts a screening and collectively chooses one or two of the projects to turn into a short film. A few years ago, the studio's Five Second Day spawned four short movies that put on the festival circuit.

**Handpicking talent** For the most part, however, du Pontavice, likes to play matchmaker, pairing ideas with their most suitable staff member. For example, he went to Hugo Gittard, a writer and director who has worked at Xilam for 10 years, with an idea for a character-driven comedy series. "He has a certain irreverence and sense of nonsense and I wanted to come up with another slapstick series using his talents." The result was a *Ren & Stimpy*-esque concept about the relationship between a pig and a fly. Du Pontavice says the two worked for months on the right definition, design and tone for a series that became *Hubert & Takako*.

"What I love about in-house development is that the design and writing work very interactively and the characters you create become quite unique," says du Pontavice.

Xilam pitched the series at Cartoon Forum in Poland last September, and a 78 x seven-minute format has been greenlit for delivery to French broadcasters Canal+, Gulli and Canal J. (He'll be shopping it internationally for the first time this month at MIPTV.)

**Deepening the talent pool** Long-time Henson executive Halle Stanford, EVP of children's entertainment, makes a point of putting creators in charge of their own ideas.

# Peggy's Little Harbour



52 x 11'  
AGES 2 TO 6  
IN HD

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**The Jim Henson Company's Dinosaur Train** (left) came from external creator Craig Bartlett, but was developed internally. Cartoon Network's Euro studio saw potential in its animator Ben Bocquelet and spent months honing his idea for *The Amazing World of Gumball*.



Though some concepts are hatched in-house, such as preschool science series *Sid the Science Kid*, an original idea conceived by CEO Lisa Henson and Stanford herself, others are pitched from outside and then brought into the Henson fold.

*Dinosaur Train*, for example, was a concept from Craig Bartlett, who came to the studio with a picture of a dinosaur and a train, inspired by his son. Stanford and the Henson team helped him figure out the show concept, the characters and the curriculum. And Jeff Munsky, Stanford explains, was a pajama manufacturer who showed her some plush toys he had created called Pajamimals. Henson was quick to pair him up with its in-house creators to hash out the concept for the puppet-based preschool series of the same name, which went to air on US preschool net Sprout this past fall.

"It was a new arena for Jeff, but he was confident in his vision," says Stanford. "We don't require someone to come into our company having everything figured out—they can come in with the heart of an idea."

Like du Pontavice, Stanford also depends on people she calls "idea generators." When PBS challenged Henson to create an online experience driven by webisodes and entertainment, but with a compelling curriculum, Stanford turned to TV writer Joe Purdy. He came up with an idea for the characters and then together with Stanford, Lisa Henson and the in-house online team worked up *Wilson & Ditch: Digging America*, a travel show with a geography and culture curriculum.

**Time to percolate** Setting up the European development studio at Cartoon Network in London was a hard sell, says VP of original series and development Daniel Lennard. "There are so many projects pitched and so many shows on the air, especially in Europe, which isn't very used to having a long development process," he says. The result was *The Amazing World of Gumball*, a series conceived and developed in-house that was given enough time to evolve

and become something more than a group of generic characters and scripts that are often the result when series that are rushed onto air.

With an ear to the ground for fresh talent, Cartoon brought Ben Bocquelet on-board as an animator and potential show creator, recognizing something intriguing about his initial idea for *Gumball*. "But if we'd gone straight ahead and made the series, it probably wouldn't have worked. We needed that extra time to figure out who the characters were and what kind of a show we wanted to make," says Lennard. The idea spent about nine months in development and CN worked closely with Ludwigsburg, Germany's Studio Soi on the series' innovative mix of 2D, CGI and live-action footage in its design.

Besides time, keeping Bocquelet involved to shepherd the vision of the series through from start to finish was essential to creating a strong end product. Lennard says the development studio initially tried to bring in outsiders and have them pitch their ideas and pass on the ones with potential to a team in-house that would try to bring them to fruition. Ultimately that process didn't work, he admits, noting its failure further underscored the strength of creator-driven concepts. "In animation, you need that person to understand the characters, how they act—everything comes from that vision," says Lennard.

One of the biggest challenges in bringing an in-house idea along through development, says Lennard, is keeping up motivation. The process of amending and tweaking can seem never-ending to animators who are usually chomping at the bit to see their show land on the airwaves. "I'm keen on people seeing from the results that it's worth it."

Right now Lennard says the studio has grown its ranks in number and has become a busy production hub with all hands on-deck to work on producing *Gumball*. So like any busy studio, finding the time to pitch fresh ideas and uncover new talent has become a challenge. "It's not easy to find other Bens," he concedes. **K**



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# Cool new shows

BY LANA CASTLEMAN



## ImaginOcean

**Producer** The Jim Henson Company (L.A.)

**Style** CGI animation using proprietary Henson Digital Puppetry

**Format** 52 x 11 minutes

**Budget** US\$250,000 to US\$350,000 per episode

**Status** It is very early days for this series that is just in the process of being introduced to possible commissioning broadcasters. Henson has a bible and is close to locking down the character design. The prodco's also on the hunt for a partner to look after secondary animation.

**Delivery** TBD

**Concept** This happy preschool series comes from the mind behind Disney's Emmy-nominated 2005 puppetry series *Johnny and the Sprites*. An expert puppeteer and seasoned musical theater performer, series creator John Tartaglia (pictured) has turned his attentions to spinning tales about the underwater world of ImaginOcean and three of its fishy inhabitants, Dorsal, Tank and Bubbles. It's this trio's friendship that forms the core of the series that will encourage social-emotional learning in the youngest viewers. In one planned ep, for example, the group of friends finds an abandoned clam shell and decides to build the best clubhouse ever. It turns out to be a real "calamity" when things don't go as planned, but the group learns to work together to make the best of it. Interestingly, this animated series is based on a play of the same name, also created by Tartaglia. ImaginOcean, "the live glow-in-the-dark musical," has been making its way around the US for the last few years and is currently in the midst of a 44-city tour. As Henson EVP Halle Stanford notes, awareness for the property is really bubbling up stateside. Tartaglia's troupe is also planning to take the play to China, Australia and Canada.

preschool

tween  
boys



## The Annoying Orange

**Producer** The Collective (L.A.)

**Style** Mixed media

**Format** 30 x 11 minutes

**Budget** In line with industry standards for this type of show, so US\$350,000-plus per half hour.

**Status** Fully financed and headed into full production with a sale to Cartoon Network US. The Collective is now on the hunt for international distribution.

**Delivery** June 2012

**Concept** You'd have to be living under a rock to have missed the buzz surrounding YouTube sensation *Annoying Orange*. The online shorts have been viewed in excess of a billion times on the Google-owned video service, and now Cartoon Network US is betting that its boy-skewing audience will tune in for further "high fructose" adventures. According to executive producer Gary Binkow, the full-length series eps will be bigger, louder and more fantastical than what's airing on YouTube right now. While inhabiting a fruit cart that sits on display at the local supermarket by day, Orange and pals Pear, Grapefruit and Passionfruit will partake in far-flung time-travelling adventures by night. In one ep entitled "Sir Juice A Lot," the gang, thanks to its magical cart, ends up storming a medieval castle to rescue the fair Passionfruit from the clutches of an unscrupulous knight who's determined to use her as a form of deodorant. Boys. Go figure.

kids  
6 to 9



**Concept** Beyond continues to build its live-action educational slate that includes three seasons of *Backyard Science* and the *Kid Detectives* series. The idea this time is to take that very hands-on learning approach from *Backyard Science* and apply it to history. In each episode, the kids on the show will become immersed in a given historical period that still fascinates children around the globe today—i.e. Ancient Egypt, Ancient Rome, the Medieval era. Viewers at home, meanwhile, will get to experience things first-hand as they're encouraged to carry out simple experiments that reflect the culture of a given time period. For example, the Ancient Egypt episode might demonstrate how to mummify an apple or build a sundial at home.

## Mystery Explorers

**Producer** Beyond Entertainment (Australia)

**Style** Live action

**Format** 26 x half hours

**Budget** Roughly US\$150,000 per half hour

**Status** This fully financed series is in the middle of scripting and pre-production, with several soon-to-be announced presales lined up.

**Delivery** Fall 2012



# Depth perception

**While 3D continues to do well at the box office, the small screen has proven to be a challenge for the tech. Is there reason for kids content creators to believe the picture will change anytime soon?**

BY GARY RUSAK

Even the rosiest of pundits or market-watchers would have to admit that 3D penetration in the kids space has been, if anything, a slow burn, especially when compared to the raging inferno predicted when the first 3D-enabled TV sets hit the consumer market two years ago. At the time, some kids content producers began earmarking resources to develop 3D content in the hopes that children and parents alike would demand that their TV-viewing time be spent taking in the eye-popping spectacle of stereoscopic 3D, a vastly improved incarnation of the technology when compared to blue and red glasses-enabled fare that haunted drive-ins past.

"It's not as big as we expected, obviously," says Carlos Biern, EVP of co-productions and worldwide distribution at Madrid, Spain's BRB Internacional. "There just aren't as many 3D screens as we would have liked to see at this point."

Biern's studio embarked on its 3D efforts months before James Cameron's *Avatar* debuted in theaters in late 2009. There is little argument that the blockbuster film's multi-billion-dollar box office take and technological virtuosity rejuvenated the format. However, the influence of the blockbuster bonanzas experienced since has not trickled down to bolster the small-screen 3D experience. The much-anticipated Blu-Ray 3D home entertainment option, for one, has been stymied by poor distribution and ill-conceived retail packaging (*Avatar*, for example, was only available with the purchase of a TV set.) And the production of 3D content for the small screen has been, by all accounts, a bit slow on the uptake.

For his part, though, Tom Cosgrove, CEO of 3net, the 24/7 3D channel set up in the US by Discovery, Sony and IMAX, appropriately remains one of the foremost boosters of the technology. He's an ardent believer that the desire for 3D amongst consumers has not dissipated in the last two years. On the other hand, he has also been able to put the hoopla that surrounded the launch of consumer-grade 3D television sets into perspective.

"The pre-release hype was such that some people thought it was going to be dominating the world in a year," Cosgrove says. "Those kinds of predictions seldom come to fruition, though."

There are a few reasons why the most optimistic projections fell short. However, they by no means point to a

burst 3D bubble that will leave consumers stranded on the flat plains. First and foremost, the general global economic climate has not rebounded at the rate many economists believed it would. Of course, 3D-equipped TVs are also approaching luxury-item status, with entry-level sets costing between US\$2,000 and US\$3,000 apiece. And with much of Europe and the US mired in a flat growth period, it stands to reason that the average family isn't running out to purchase a new TV. Even if some do, only a small percentage seems willing to cough up the extra money to subscribe to the deluxe cable packages required to access 3D content. Many cable providers, like BSkyB in the UK, for example, have placed their 3D channels at the very top tier of their subscription services.

Alexander Lentjes is a stereoscopic consultant and animation producer for Bristol, UK-based 3D Revolution Productions and has been championing the cause of broadcast 3D since its early days. Not surprisingly, he sees the premium being placed on 3D network subscriptions as stifling creative production in the format.

"They are at such a premium," he says. "Who can pay upwards of US\$140 a month so they can get that channel? Who would even want to?"

Another reason for the lack of penetration might also be pinned on the untrained customer service reps working at modern big-box retailers, where a majority of new TV sets are sold. While it is hard to prove such a claim with hard evidence, anecdotally some in the industry wonder if the lack of know-how on the sales floor might be slowing sales. "On the consumer level, there isn't the expertise at the store level to really sell the product correctly," Mark Ringwald, head of program acquisition and scheduling for 3net, told the "Checking in on 3D" panel at Kidscreen Summit 2012 in February.

**Reasons to keep on track** While expectations for the 3D market might need to be scaled back, there is reason to stay the course for those who have committed to setting up 3D animation facilities and spending upwards of 30% more to make stereoscopic toons. In a market where TV sales are essentially flat, the latest numbers show that more and more people are opting for the 3D-enabled sets. In Q3 of 2011, 6.6 million 3D-ready TVs were shipped to retailers worldwide, up 27% from the previous quarter. Q4 estimates show the same growth (30%) over Q3, which adds up to an estimated 21.5 million 3D sets shipped globally by the end of 2011. Projecting these numbers further down the road has proven to be troublesome in the past, but even conservative estimates peg the penetration of 3D sets at more than 60% of the total market by 2015.

"The adoption has actually been quicker than HD," says 3Net's Cosgrove. "Very soon, every set over 42 inches in size will just automatically have 3D."

Jonathan Dern, president of Woodland Hills, California-based Cinedigm/Kidtoon Films, produces live 3D broadcasts and other content in 3D, including *Bob the Builder*. He says that one only has to look at what is going on in the movie

industry to catch a glimpse of the technology's future.

"3D TV hasn't yet been adopted fully, but the food chain in the entertainment world is being fed from the top, and if you look at movies, you can see what is coming," he said at the same Kidscreen Summit panel.

What Dern is referring to is the continued success of 3D movies at the international box office and the technological and creative breakthroughs that have accompanied it.

"Theatrically it continues to be massive," says Cosgrove. "We are seeing audiences in North America choosing the 3D option at a rate of 65%. As well, they are paying more for the 3D option in a tough economy."

Additionally, since Cameron's *Avatar* bowed, there has been a renewed interest from the upper echelon of the creative community, with celebrated directors such



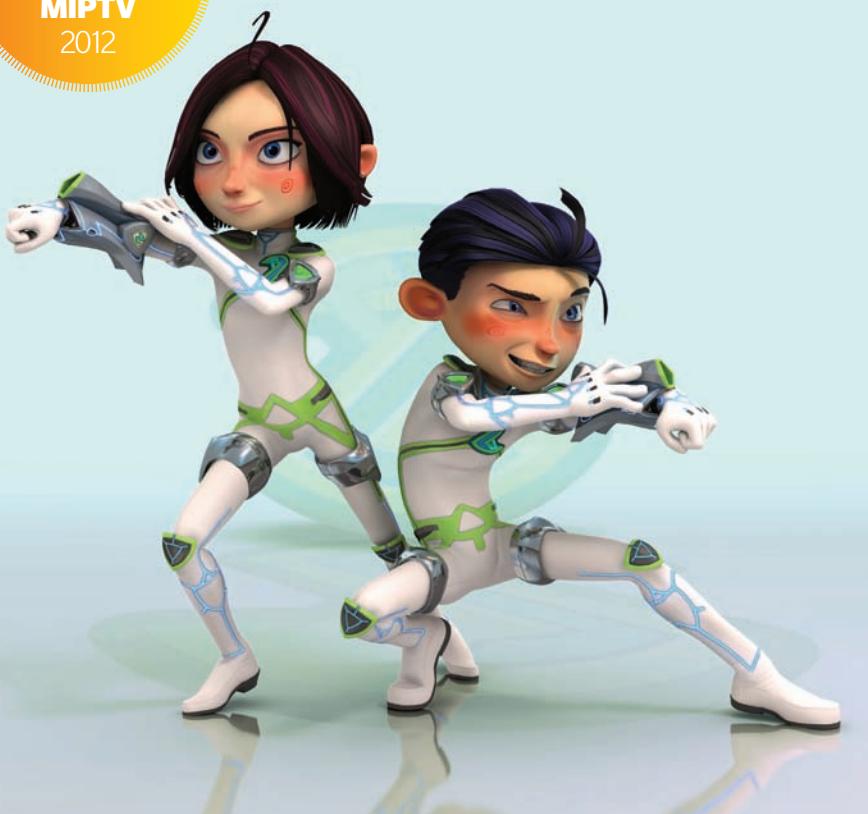
as Martin Scorsese, Steven Spielberg and George Lucas all backing the technology either through new productions or by reformatting classics like *Star Wars Episode 1: The Phantom Menace* and *Marvel/Sony's Spider-Man* in 3D. This continued success at the box office indicates that it is only a matter of time before consumers demand the experience in their own homes.

**3T-tablets, tablets and more tablets** One of the most anticipated innovations that many in the industry believe will give the production of kids 3D content the boost it needs is the advent of 3D-enabled tablet devices.

"The second Apple announces that the iPad has 3D capabilities, everybody will be saying 'Tablet, tablet, tablet' instead of 'TV, TV, TV,'" says Lentjes.

The new iPad, unveiled in early March, does have the necessary faster processor and some eye-tracking technology that will be able to better mimic 3D. However, there are expectations that future versions will keep evolving towards true 3D, with seamless eye-tracking that will produce a glasses-free 3D experience for the tablet.

DreamWorks got into the Blu-Ray 3D space in 2010 through a deal with Samsung, which bundled the studio's movies with its 3D TVs (top). TV content, meanwhile, continues to play catch-up. But some producers are banking on the tech by animating their series in stereoscopic 3D, like BRB Internacional and its new production *Zoobabu* (opposite).



In terms of kids TV, there is just one 3D block available via US channel 3net—indie prodco Tiny Island snagged a coveted slot with action-adventure series *Dream Defenders*

"When the tablet comes out where you can see 3D without glasses, that will be the future," Dern told the panel at Kidscreen Summit. "At some point, all the platforms on which we consume entertainment will have a 3D mode—that is going to be a given."

Tablets with 3D capability will also have a special significance for those chiefly concerned with producing children's content. "When the iPad is able to show 3D, it will really allow kids to watch 3D," says Biern. "You won't have to spend a few thousand dollars on a flat screen to see it. A lot of people talk about the evolution in the technology coming down from the theaters, but there is a different story to be told. I think we will see 3D evolve up from the tablets and other more cost-effective devices."

According to Lentjes, companies are already drawing up preliminary plans for 3D apps and he has started contemplating the technological challenges therein. "People will want to see new hot new content on their tablet the second they can," he says. "They won't want repurposed stuff, so developers and consultants like me need to be prepared to work within the new parameters."

Cosgrove also believes that the adoption of 3D technology on tablet and mobile devices will lead to more consumer penetration for the technology and ultimately change the 3D production landscape. "Consumers expect at this point that they can get their video entertainment on every device they have," he says. "This will be the case with 3D, too, where they have it on their mobile devices and their tablets. It really signals a big opportunity because, while not everyone is going to have a 3D TV in their home next year, a lot more people will have all these other devices."

Cosgrove says that at the moment, there are approximately 95 million 3D devices around the globe, this

number will likely increase tenfold by 2014. "Mobile handsets, tablets, laptops, cameras," he contends. "We will see it everywhere and we will also start to see more user-generated content."

**Look mom, no glasses** One thing that has not changed in the last couple of years is the importance that producers place on the creation of a glasses-free 3D viewing experience. Some believe that the original adoption rate for 3D was stunted by some manufacturer's choice to follow the active glasses track, rather than the passive one. (Without getting too technical, active glasses are usually heavy, battery-powered specs that retail for around US\$75 a pair, while the passive ones are the simple plastic pairs worn in movie theaters that cost less than a dollar each.) Consumers clearly preferred the less expensive glasses, even if the manufacturers were a bit late in coming to the realization. However, the whole debate could be moot with the emergence of glasses-free technology.

"A year ago, there were prototypes for glasses-free and they were limited," says Cosgrove. "This year, the prototypes were infinitely better. I think we will see much more widespread use of those devices in the future." Ringwald was also impressed by the new advances he saw at CES in Las Vegas in January.

"The big takeaway for me there was that people want to know when they can watch 3D without glasses," he says. "And that will eventually be a reality."

**The kids content gap** While US-based 3net continues to lead the way, currently hosting more than 200 hours of 3D content on-air, only about 10% of that content is made for kids. Right now, the net has just one children's block on Fridays at 5 p.m. that repeats on the weekend. However, network execs expect this offering to grow.

"We are always looking for more content," says Ringwald. "We are looking to expand our kids block to reach boys seven to 12 with adventure and technology themes."

Currently, BRB is one company looking to fill the 3D kids content gap in Europe and beyond. It is in production on stereoscopic 3D feature film *SuperBernard* (one x 75 minutes), based on the South Korea/France co-pro about an accident prone polar bear, as well as 3D preschool series *Mica* (52 x seven minutes) that starts production in April. The company has also recently finished animating new series *Canimals* and *Zoobabu* in 3D and CGI formats, for delivery to European and Asian networks this year.

"I feel like we can now handle how to tell the story in 3D," says Biern. "We started a few years ago so that we could learn how to write and create for 3D, not just to make a lot of money. You learn the craft first and then the market will come. I'm still sure that there is a market for kids out there."

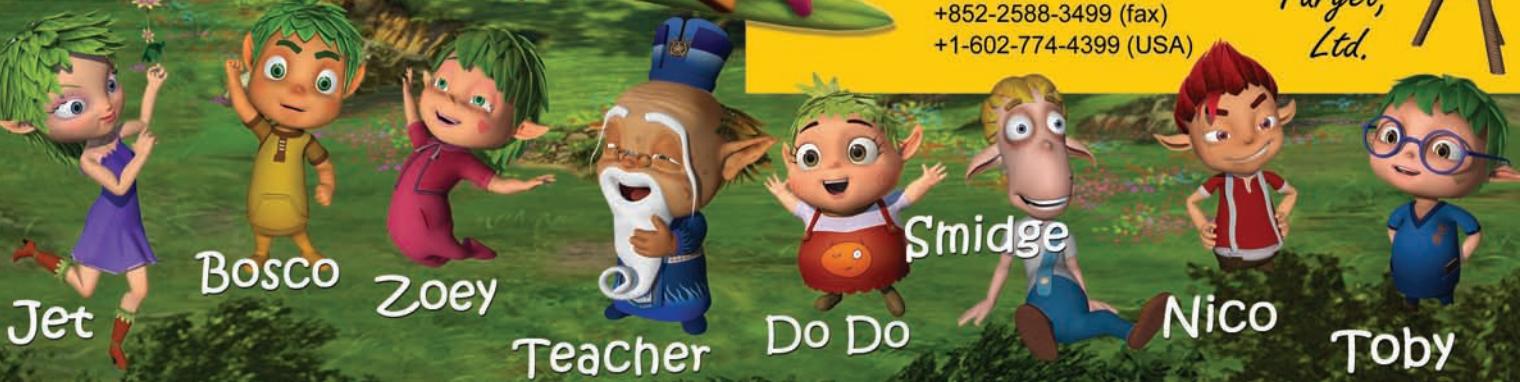
The craft-first attitude was also expressed by David Kwok, CEO of Tiny Island Productions. The Taiwan-based company currently produces *Dream Defenders* for 3Net's kids block. "If you are thinking purely economically, then don't do 3D," he says. "Don't think about it as a way to recoup investment. For us, 3D was a crucial part of the content itself." **k**

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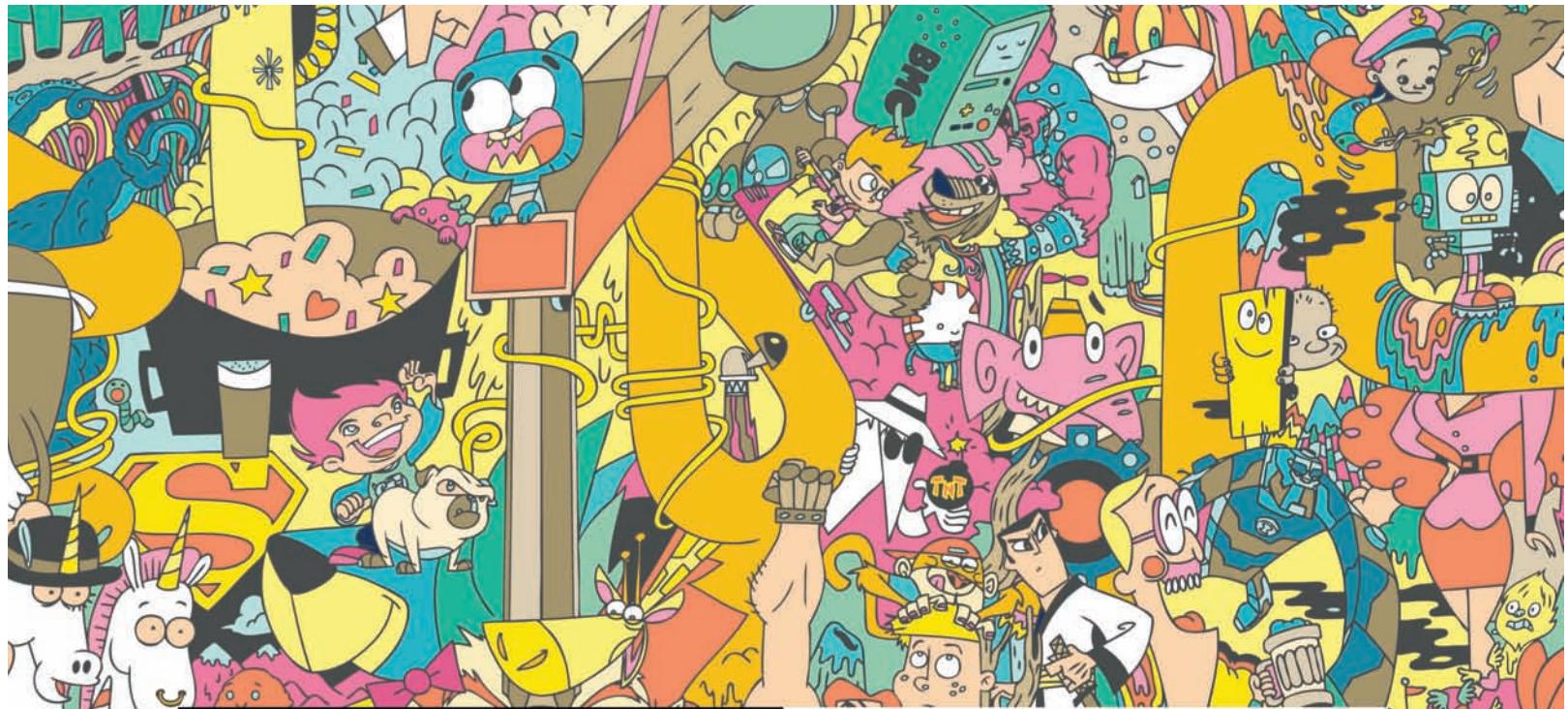


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Jeff@boscoandzoey.com

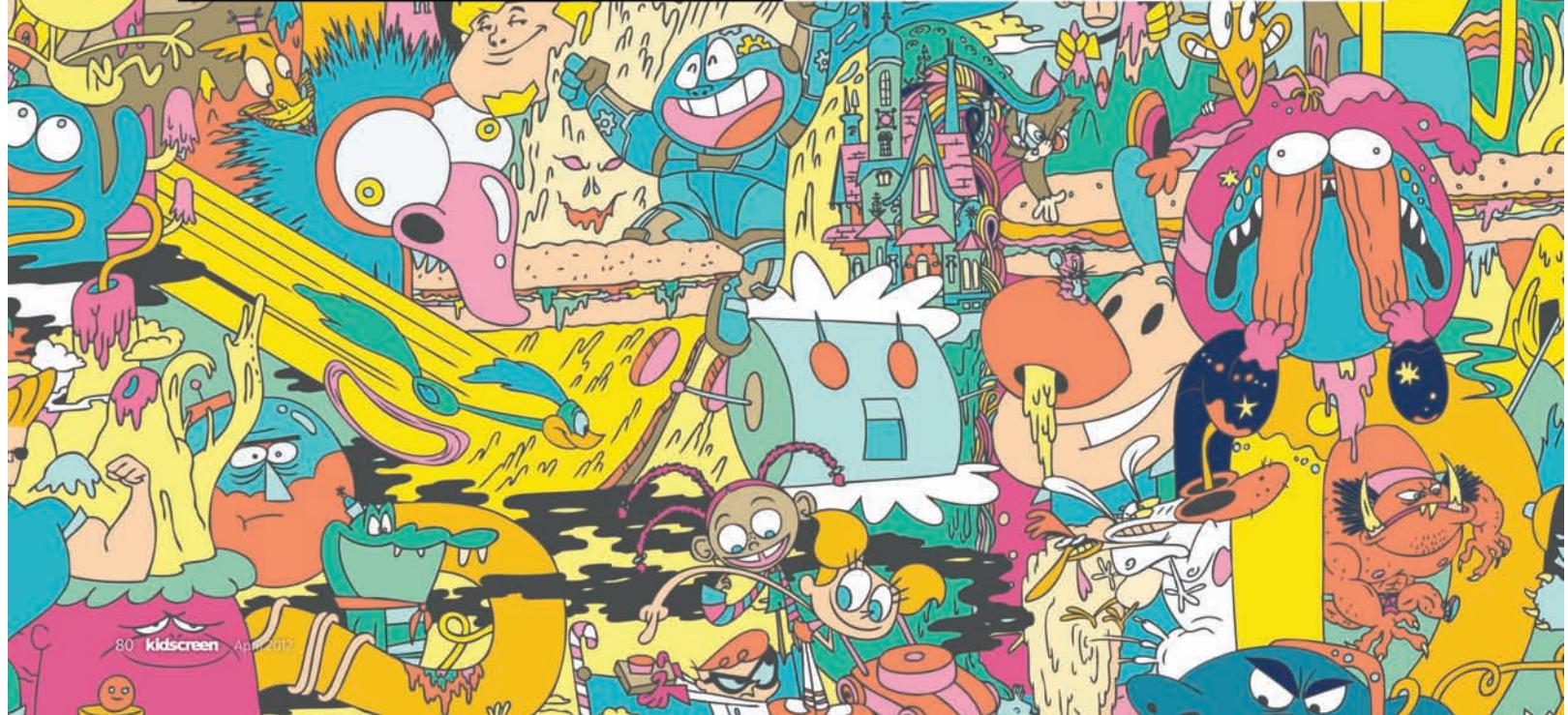
Stephanie Wong - Licensing Manager  
Stephanie@boscoandzoey.com

Three Pacific Place  
1 Queen's Road East, 3/FL  
Hong Kong  
+852-2588-3440  
+852-2588-3499 (fax)  
+1-602-774-4399 (USA)





Cartoon Network





# turns 20!

**No one said launching a 24-hour toon-centric network would be easy. But two decades and 300 million households later, industry game-changer Cartoon Network has shown the world that kids have a real appetite for animation—and constant content innovation.**

BY BRENDAN CHRISTIE



# 20

You may be **20**  
but you still act like a tween  
(and at Fresh, that's a compliment)





**W**hen the curtain drops and the definitive history of broadcasting is written, few characters will have had as much impact on the medium as Ted Turner. After all, it was his Turner Broadcasting System that delivered the first 24-hour news channel to the world—CNN in 1980—a proposition most pundits at the time proclaimed would die a lingering and spectacular death. It clearly has yet to happen.

And then Turner had the audacity to repeat the trick a decade later, when on October 1, 1992 the company launched the world's first 24-hour channel dedicated to all things animation—Cartoon Network.

This time the response from critics was, well...pretty much exactly the same. There was no way, many asserted, that any network could fill an entire day with cartoons and attract enough kids and advertisers to make it worthwhile—especially with a small budget and a library full of arguably tired old animation like CN's.

So with minimal fanfare, unduly low media expectations, an underdog mindset and a firm belief that risk-taking was the order of the day, CN was unleashed upon a US household audience of two million with its very first offering, *The Great Piggy Bank Robbery*.

And then something tremendous happened. A year later, household coverage had grown to almost nine million. By the end of the following two, market penetration was up to 22 million. Four years after launch, CN was being beamed into 45 million homes across the US. And not only were kids tuning in, but so were adults. CN had clearly struck a chord, naysayers be damned.

Now 20 years in, CN is available in 200-plus countries and more than 300 million households. And yet, you'll still find that same underdog spirit and the maverick mindset of Ted Turner echoing through the halls at CN's headquarters in Atlanta. What is it about the network that makes it tick? *Kidscreen* needed to get to the bottom of it.



### Screwy Squirrel and other innovations

In the heady days of the late 1980s and early 1990s, Turner Broadcasting went on a programming shopping spree, picking up anything of value that wasn't firmly nailed down. Into the basket went Hanna-Barbera Productions, as well as much of the MGM, Associated Artists and early Warner Bros. libraries—each bringing with them a hefty animation catalogue. In fact, at its launch CN had access to an estimated 8,500 hours that belonged to the Turner toon dominion.

The fact that much of that content was short-form—six and seven minutes in length—presented the network with both a scheduling problem and an opportunity. CN's first GM stateside, Rob Sorcher, who leapt from a successful career in advertising to join the channel, recalls the challenges faced in those early days.

"We didn't even get the channel in New York, where I lived," Sorcher recounts. "I remember having to go into an office to look at a tape of Cartoon Network, which was this new thing. I took one look at it and said, 'I'm packing my things and moving to Atlanta, Georgia.' As an idea, it was one of the most incredible things I had ever heard of."

Like any good advertising exec will attest, Sorcher says the early success of CN had much to do with its on-air presentation. The network would put three cartoons together

## Tooning into two decades



**October 1, 1992**  
Turner Broadcasting launches the first 24-hour all-animation channel, Cartoon Network into two million US households

**April 30, 1993**  
Cartoon Network launches in Latin America



**September 17, 1993**  
Cartoon Network Europe launches

**October 6, 1994**  
Cartoon Network Asia launches

**February 1995**  
Launch of *World Premiere Toons*—in total, 48 shorts are commissioned and several original series emerge from this program

**March 1996**  
*Courage the Cowardly Dog*, a *World Premiere Toon*, is nominated for an Academy Award

**April 28, 1996**  
*Dexter's Laboratory* premieres as Cartoon Network's first original half-hour series and becomes the top-rated show on the channel



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**“CN has been a tremendous partner both in the US and internationally. In fact, 9 Story’s first proprietary series, *Best Ed*, was a Cartoon Network EMEA prebuy and the impetus for launching our distribution division. The team is innovative and they take measured risks, which is crucial in this current market.”**

—Natalie Osborne, EVP of business development, 9 Story Entertainment

into a 22-minute show, with great packaging, interesting bumpers and wraparounds, and create appointment viewing. “Essentially, I took my skills from advertising (which is really all I knew),” says Sorcher, adding “and in some ways we set up the network to function as an advertising agency.”

But it wasn’t just about bundling content and banging it out on-air. “We reminded people of the genius of cartoons,” Sorcher explains. “Some of those Warner Bros. cartoons were from the 1940s, and they have been shown all over the place. But when we presented them, we really curated the library...in a way that makes you think about them in a new way. We did that, and it resonated with the audience.”

Ultimately, CN didn’t sound, feel or look like other kids networks that were available on US cable at the time. “We kind of straddled a cartoon-loving audience and a kids audience, and it really paid off,” Sorcher notes.

The innovation and creativity required to make the most of CN’s library-fuelled schedule helped establish the tone and approach for the network. But if you’re looking for an anecdote which encapsulates that early CN attitude, look no further than *Screwy Squirrel Day*.

To celebrate April Fools Day in 1997, CN decided it would run nothing but the same obnoxious, five-minute Tex Avery cartoon, *Screwy Squirrel*, all day long. They’d keep the normal bumpers and promos (i.e. “Up next, *The Flintstones*...”), but only *Screwy Squirrel* would ever make an appearance.

“This starts at six in the morning,” laughs Sorcher, “and the phones start ringing. All this craziness starts happening. Then we find out that there is a giant snowstorm on the Eastern seaboard, and all the kids are home from school. Parents are going insane. They’re calling the cable operators, and the cable operators are calling us.



**July 1997**  
Cow and Chicken and Johnny Bravo launch as the network's second and third original primetime half-hour series. The launch increases average primetime ratings among kids 6 to 11 by 52%.

**July 28, 1998**  
CartoonNetwork.com goes live—the channel's first website logs four million visits in the first week

**November 18, 1998**  
*The Powerpuff Girls* premieres and is named one of TV's Top 10 New Kids Shows by TV Guide

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# 20 LONG EARS!



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Innovative shorts format  
World Premiere Toons  
(a.k.a. What a Cartoon!) spawned CN's first crop of original hits like *Dexter's Laboratory* (left), *The Powerpuff Girls* (middle) and *Cow and Chicken* (right)

"They're chasing us down the hallway, but we're running from corner to corner in the building so that we won't be found. Everyone in the network was on the telephone fielding calls from angry people, people that are amused... It just wouldn't end."

The stunt finally ground to a halt when an angry cable operator resorted to sending a fax that stated the calls were crippling its switchboard and it was becoming a safety issue.

"So we sent [someone] into the master control room," recalls Sorcher, "and in real time he typed messages that would scroll across television screens saying: 'Screwy Squirrel has

taken over master control... Things will be restored to normal soon.' We tried to hold on as long as we could, and we got to 6 p.m., but it was getting too serious.

"Seeing everyone engaged on the phone, seeing the way we could touch so many people and elicit such a response... We were just a small startup network. That stands out in my mind as a very memorable day that really captured the spirit of the place."

So, would things have been all that different if CN had launched with a full slate of original cartoons and an overflowing war chest? Sorcher thinks so. "The necessity to be creative had an impact," he says. "It [meant we] celebrated the authors, the creators and the animators who were really the visionaries behind our productions." He adds that the initial reliance on the library let the net develop original content incrementally. "We did not have to just fill our whole schedule. We could put on the good stuff and, to a large extent, that's what we are still doing today."

### Getting really creative

CN found a way to make the most of its library, but it was really only when it decided to create original content that the network came into its own. In 1995, Hanna-Barbera (also a Turner company) and CN got together to launch an initiative that would find new creative talent and help them spread their wings—World Premiere Toons (also known in animation circles as What a Cartoon!).

Fred Seibert, who was then the head of Hanna-Barbera, explains the concept. "Back in the day when cartoons were great, they would make one at a time," he says. "And based on whether people liked it or not, they would make another one. They didn't have series then. The cartoons were theatrical."

"In contemporary animation, you sell a concept and get an order for 13 episodes, which seems pretty wasteful to me. What if we went back to the days when they did it like theatrical cartoons? No pilots—just make a cartoon that is going to go on the air. (A pilot is more of a thing you mess with before you put it on the air.)"

Seibert also had another agenda. "Hanna-Barbera had not had a hit since *The Smurfs* in 1983, and I needed to reinvigorate the in-house talent base because it had been stripped by [other companies] getting back into the cartoon business. Based on my interviews, animators around

## CN comes to Canada

It turns out Cartoon Network isn't already available in every country under the sun. But a new deal with Canadian media conglomerate Astral and its animation station Teletoon (co-owned with Corus Entertainment) is going some ways to fix that. Announced in February, Cartoon Network Canada will launch for the first time in the territory this summer.

The new channel is operating on a license that mandates 15% of its programming be classed as Canadian content (Cancon) in year one, 25% in year two and then 35% from year three onwards. (By comparison, Teletoon's requirement is 60%.)

However, meeting those numbers shouldn't be too much of a hardship for the programming team at Teletoon, which will also program CN Canada. A significant amount of successful Canadian content already airs on Cartoon Network US, including the Total Drama Island franchise from Fresh TV and Cookie Jar Entertainment's *Johnny Quest*. Those shows will count towards Cancon numbers, meaning CN Canada will be able to bring even more US hits to Canadian viewers.

We chatted with Teletoon president Len Cochrane upon his return from Cartoon Network's Hall of Game celebrations that took place in late February. "They have an incredible culture," he observes. "They made us feel as if we were part of the team."

The initial 10-year deal, says Cochrane, really represents the opportunity to showcase some of the Cartoon Network shows that aren't available in Canada. "There is a ton of great content, particularly in live action, that will give Cartoon Network Canada the buzz that [Teletoon] just didn't have the shelf space for."

**April 1, 2000**  
Boomerang, CN's first spin-off network, devoted to airing classic cartoons, launches in the US

**May 22, 2000**  
Dedicated to producing original toons, CN Studios opens in Burbank, California



**October 2000**  
Cartoon Network becomes the exclusive television home to all Warner Bros.' Looney Tunes series

**September 2, 2001**  
Targeting adults 18-34, CN's newest franchise, Adult Swim, premieres—by year's end, CN posts a 67% growth with the demo

**July 3, 2002**  
*The Powerpuff Girls Movie*, CN's first-ever theatrical venture, premieres in more than 2,000 theaters in the US through Warner Bros. Pictures.

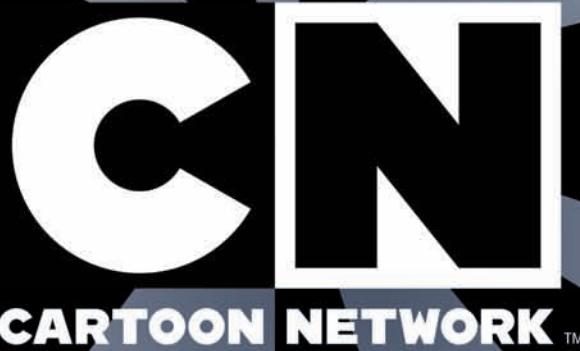
**October 1, 2002**  
On its 10th birthday, CN distribution reaches 81.9 million American homes, nearly full US cable penetration



**November 7, 2003**  
Cartoon Network introduces its first-ever micro-series, *Star Wars: The Clone Wars*, consisting of 20 shorts produced in association with Lucasfilm

**February 25, 2004**  
At its annual Upfront presentation, CN announces production of more new episodes than ever before in its 11-year history—500 new half hours

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**Faced with retooling**  
CN in 2007, president  
Stuart Snyder went  
straight to the experts—  
the net's kid viewers—  
for guidance

the industry were all feeling frustrated that they were essentially becoming transcribers for sitcom writers. They didn't have a position in the modern world where they could ply their craft in a primary way."

Cartoon Network would become that place.

And if talent development was the aim, World Premiere Toons hit home run after home run. Consider that the first year introduced the world to Genndy Tartakovsky (*Dexter's Laboratory*), Craig McCracken (*The Powerpuff Girls*), John Dilworth (*Courage the Cowardly Dog*), Van Partible (*Johnny Bravo*) and David Feiss (*Cow and Chicken*).

"From my perspective, it wasn't just the number of groundbreaking series," qualifies Seibert, "but the talent that was unleashed upon the industry."

**"Cartoon Network took on our animated series *Total Drama Island* and helped turn it into an international juggernaut. Working with this team of smart, passionate executives has been a total joy ride."**

—Tom McGillis, president, Fresh TV

Cartoon Network as an entity has always been talent-first, contends Seibert. "It looks at where the greatest creative professionals are and thinks about how it can do things together with them. And when you focus on the talent rather than the end-product, people will work 10 times as hard for you because they are working for themselves as much as they are working for the product. I think you've seen that play out in a million different ways in Cartoon Network's history."

Seibert says the talent-first approach is part of the Turner DNA. "What you have there is an entrepreneurial

culture that doesn't look to solve problems the way everyone else does. Working for Ted Turner, you didn't say, 'But this is what the other guys do.' You said, 'Ted, this is the way I think we can win.'"

### Gaining momentum

What became signature CN shows like *Dexter's Laboratory*, *The Powerpuff Girls*, *Cow and Chicken*, *Johnny Bravo*, *Courage the Cowardly Dog* and *Ed, Edd n' Eddy* exploded onto the television landscape in the late 1990s, propelling the channel into a period of, uh, animated growth (apologies, couldn't resist).

By May 1998, CN hit the 50-million household mark. That same year, *CartoonNetwork.com* welcomed four million visitors in the first week of its existence.

And by 2000, CN was able to launch its first spin-off platform, Boomerang—an all-cartoon channel devoted to airing classic animation. The start of the new millennium also saw the launch of Cartoon Network Studios in L.A., a production facility set up to feed innovative original animation properties into the channel.

By the time it celebrated its 10-year anniversary in 2002, CN was available in almost 82 million homes across the US—close to 100% cable penetration—and the hits were just beginning. *Foster's Home for Imaginary Friends*, *Samurai Jack*, *Star Wars: Clone Wars* (with Lucasfilm) and global success *Ben 10* soon began to roll out and find solid footing.

But while CN continued to grow in popularity—by 2006, it was in 200 million homes worldwide—the network was beginning to be pulled in too many directions by both its successes and its experiments, and many in the industry feared it might be losing its way.

Enter new EVP and COO Stuart Snyder, the exec who would soon lead the next CN renaissance and eventually become its president.

### Ask the experts

"When I came on-board in 2007," surmises Snyder of that period in the network's history, "Cartoon Network was still entertaining kids. However, whatever the reason, our

**August 13, 2004**  
*Foster's Home for Imaginary Friends* premieres with a 90-minute film, followed by its first 30-minute ep debuting on August 20—CN's 21st original series. Its performance ranks as the highest-rated original series premiere in CN history with kids 6 to 11.

**February 28, 2005**  
CN's first-ever healthy lifestyle initiative, *Get Animated*, launches on-air and online

**June 21, 2005**  
Cartoon Network Enterprises (CNE) is established to consolidate and handle consumer products licensing for the brand

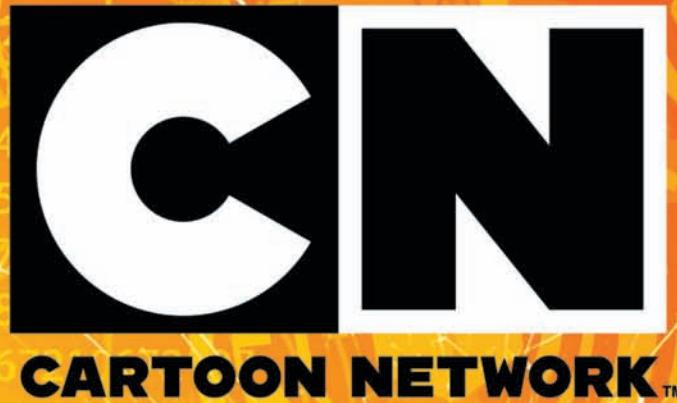


**January 14, 2006**  
*Ben 10* premieres as Cartoon Network's first original series for Saturday mornings

**July 19, 2006**  
CN announces its first MMOG in partnership with Seoul, Korea-based Grigori Entertainment

**December 8, 2006**  
CN's first-ever original live-action and animation movie, *Re-Animated*, sets a new performance record, ranking as the number-one program with 6 to 11s and 2 to 11s in its time period amongst all ad-supported basic cable

**July 2007**  
*CartoonNetwork.com* hits an all-time high, with visitors to the site spending an average of 77 minutes per session, according to Nielsen/NetRatings



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The audience's demand for live-action programming led to the launch of CN's hit annual awards show, *Hall of Game Awards*

shows and brands were just not connecting. We were experiencing a little bit of a lull."

The solution was to turn to the experts for advice—CN's core audience. "One of our team's missions was to learn what kids liked and didn't like and what this generation was watching and doing," recalls Snyder. "We did a lot of research, and that's how we developed our strategy."

"My belief is that if you are in the kids or young adults business, it's not a one-way relationship. It absolutely has to be a two-way, 360-degree approach. Our job is to engage our audience everywhere they live. So it's not enough to just put a show on the air and see what the ratings are. I want to know what kids are saying about the shows. What are they enjoying? What are they doing during their day, afternoon and evening? How are they engaging with content? What can we learn, and how can we help them? What are we missing? This audience, more than any other, is moving so fast and changing so dynamically that we always have to be, as best as we can, one step ahead."

While Snyder asserts that CN's core focus will always be animation, one of the first things his team learned when it turned to its viewers was that there was a desire to see live-action content on the net—despite the channel's moniker.

"The kids told us they wanted to see more of themselves," Snyder observes. "They told us they liked live action and seeing themselves in the programming. So we had to figure out what that meant for Cartoon Network. That led us to experiment. We're not afraid of trying new things, and we realize some things are going to work and some things aren't. But if we learn from [them], that will lead us to better content."

**July 25, 2007**  
The network's first MMOG, *Cartoon Network Universe: FusionFall* debuts at Comic-Con in San Diego and is scheduled for a summer 2008 release

**September 14, 2007**  
*Out of Jimmy's Head* premieres as Cartoon Network's first-ever live-action/animation hybrid series, based on its popular original movie, *Re-Animated*

**November 21, 2007**  
Cartoon Network's first original live-action movie special *Ben 10: Race Against Time* sets records as the most-watched telecast in CN history: 3,987,000 viewers ages 2+.

**February 12, 2008**  
Turner Broadcasting lands the broadcast rights to CGI-animated series *Star Wars: The Clone Wars* from George Lucas

**April 18, 2008**  
*Ben 10: Alien Force* begins the next chapter in the continuing Ben 10 saga five years later



**June 5, 2008**  
*Total Drama Island* from Cake Entertainment and Fresh TV premieres as animation's first "reality series," quickly becoming CN's top-rated series among 6 to 11s and tweens

**December 11, 2008**  
The finale of *Total Drama Island* scores as the number-one telecast in CN history among tweens ages 9 to 14

## Got It. Need It?

Chief content officer Rob Sorcher talks Cartoon Network's creative strategy

### Is there one particular element that makes a show great?

I don't think there is any one axis that crosses every show and ties them together in one way. But I insist that there be something very different about each of them. I'm looking for diversity, not sameness.

### Is there a Cartoon Network formula, or a program that's sure to work for the channel?

No, there's no perfect formula. I think it's based on so many different factors. We are, by our nature, expanding and exploring and I think we have to go to other places outside [the network] for that reason. For example, if we see a property like *How to Train Your Dragon* from DreamWorks, we say 'OK, that feels like it could be us. That is going to be a fantastic show. It's going to be a great look. It is going to be different for our air.' And that has a place for sure.

And *Gumball* [from our European development studio] is literally the first UK comedy to ever come to this country and succeed in animation. That is a real testament to the show. The notion that we can have Cartoon Network in another part of the world send a product that fits perfectly with our brand, and resonates with our audience like it has—that is a notable thing. So formula, no...We let shows be what they need to be and then we'll put it all together in an interesting way.

### What are you looking for right now?

I'm really hesitant to answer that one. Here's what I would say: We are always looking for new and unique voices. From anywhere. That's it. That's really it. It can come in the form of a visual, or it can come in form of animation. It can come in the form of writing. It can be an idea. I think trying to expand it beyond that would be over-analyzing.

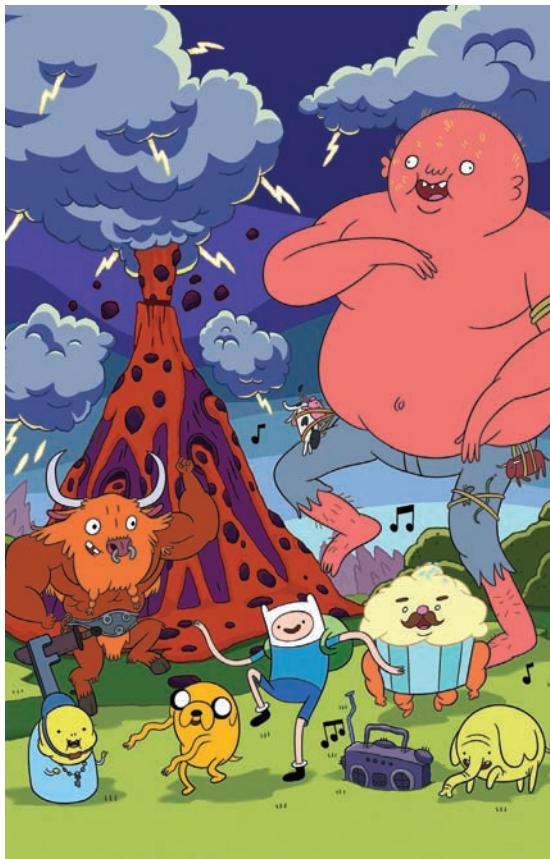
I do think that, yeah, it is rare to find something that you know is both unique and timeless at the same time. When I see [something like an] *Adventure Time*, I think, 'Not only does this feel very new, but it also feels like something timeless. It feels like a very big world that can go on and on, and yet it does not feel formulaic or corporately produced.' Nor does it feel like a marketing strategy. It feels like a fantastic world that I want to be a part of, and it's something that is going to delight and entertain our audience. It is rare—very rare—and it can come from anywhere. That's what I am looking for.

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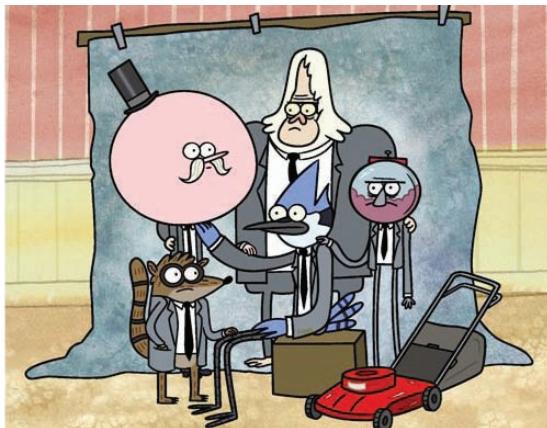


So the first round of live-action shows that rolled out, including scripted dramas *Unnatural History* and *Tower Prep*, had great production values and storylines, but Snyder admits they didn't draw a big enough audience to merit renewals. At the same time, CN put its foot in the other live-action camp—game shows and formats inspired by reality TV. First came buddy-oriented *Dude, What Would Happen* followed by Andrew W.K.-hosted blow-up spectacular *Destroy Build Destroy*, and later *Hole in the Wall*, a US format based on the original wacky Japanese game show. These three shows—live action, very funny—tapped into what boys wanted to watch and connected with CN's audience.

"They also led us to *Level Up*," adds Snyder. Launched last November, *Level Up* is CN's highest-rated live-action series to date. "It's a 30-minute comedy," Snyder contends. "But it's in the Cartoon Network voice. It's about gaming. It's about teamwork. It's about villains and creatures coming from the gaming world into the real world."

Like many cablecasters that have tried to diversify, the initial response to the live-action initiative was tentative at best. There is always concern when networks move away from their traditional core and experiment with new programming, but Snyder sees it as a must.

"If you don't take risks, you're never going to have big rewards. If you always play it safe—I'm going to say this in baseball terms—you'll have nice singles and doubles, but you are never going to have the home run or the grand slam."



With the arrival of original hit series *Adventure Time* (left), *Regular Show* (top) and *The Amazing World of Gumball* (right) over the past two years, Cartoon Network is once again innovating the artform of animated comedy

Experimentation with live action has even led Cartoon Network to create a sports award show, of all things. At its launch in 2011, *Hall of Game Awards* logged 37 million viewer votes online as kids lined up to choose their fave sports stars. And in year two? The competition has attracted 102 million online votes from fans.

Last year, the network also kicked off its greatest social responsibility program success with "Stop Bullying: Speak Up," an anti-violence initiative that Snyder says was also inspired by what the kids were asking for.

"We don't want to preach," he asserts. "We want to empower kids, and they told us this was a topic that was on their minds, and that they wanted to be able to do something about it."

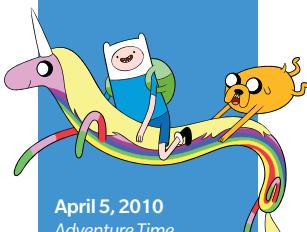
In the end, CN was able to bring the full weight of the Time Warner media empire to bear on the initiative, including cablenet CNN and news magazine *Time*. In addition, Facebook and US retailer Barnes & Noble have become partners dedicated to disseminating the anti-bullying message. "We have done two town halls with CNN and we aired our own *Speak Up* documentary special on CN in mid-March," notes Snyder. "We have also gotten the attention of Washington, DC, which I am most pleased about. And I think Cartoon Network is in a unique position to be this voice because, again, it is coming from our kids."



**June 17 & 20, 2009**  
CN unveils four new live-action alternative series as part of its groundbreaking CN Real block of programming, including hit *Destroy Build Destroy*



**September 13, 2009**  
Original live-action/CG-animated movie *Scooby-Doo! The Mystery Begins* set all-new records as the most-watched telecast in CN history

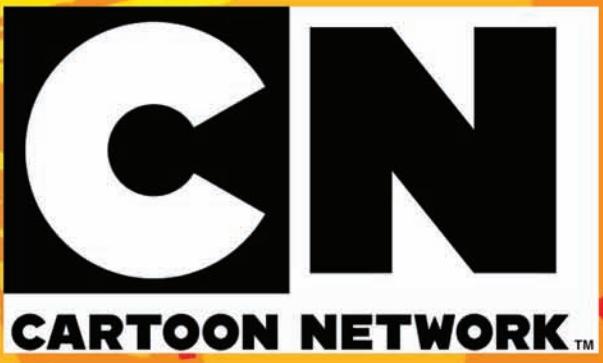


**April 5, 2010**  
*Adventure Time* launches, ushering in a new era of comedy for CN

**January 1, 2011**  
*Adventure Time* closes the year ranked number-one in its time period across all TV, broadcast and cable, among targeted kids and boys demos



**February 25, 2011**  
CN's inaugural *Hall Of Game Awards* attracts 5.6 million viewers over three weekend plays, earning double-digit gains among targeted kids and boys audiences



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FROM YOUR FRIENDS AT



**“From a programming standpoint, CN understands the value of a franchise and how to build it. Whether it is an Adventure Time now or a Ben 10 or a Scooby-Doo, they know what they are doing, they understand their audience and they know what resonates with them.”**

But for all its willingness to take on the unknown and untried, there is no doubt that animation remains at the heart of the CN brand.

Sorcher, who returned to the CN fold years after exiting his GM post to take up his current mantle as chief content officer, points to new animated comedies *Adventure Time*, *Regular Show* and *The Amazing World of Gumball* as the beginning of a next great wave of cartoons.

“This is a new generation,” he notes, “and you can see that there is a difference in the kind of cartoon and the sense of humor that appeals to it. But the core values and the things that drive all the content—getting behind the creative talent, taking risks, and the notion of using shorts and letting animators find their way within these shows—that’s all still true today.”

Fred Seibert agrees. “The idea that great talent will do something unexpected is built into the DNA of Cartoon Network. No institution is perfect, and Cartoon has certainly

stumbled as much as anyone else has, but what is really, really true is that it has reinvented the vocabulary of cartoons for kids consistently over 20 years.”

Seibert also points to the predecessors of this current crop of hits like *Chowder* (2007) and *The Marvelous Misadventures of Flapjack* (2008) as great examples of CN’s innovative streak. “Those shows are real indicators of the kind of DNA that is at play at Cartoon Network,” he says. “And I think it hasn’t just reinvigorated the channel over the years—it has reinvigorated the entire industry.”

But two decades in and despite all its wins, Cartoon Network still doesn’t seem like a place where you go to rest on your laurels.

“Even with success, we should always act like an underdog,” says Snyder. “If you don’t, someone is going to come sneaking by just when you’re getting overly cocky and arrogant. And that should never be in our blood stream. That should never be in our DNA.” **k**

—Trent Locke, VP of Business Operations, Teletoon

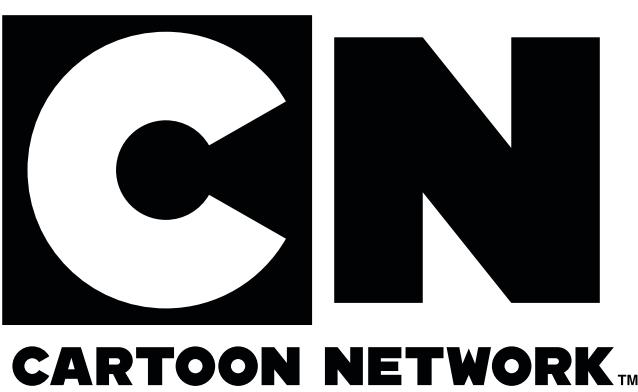


March 10, 2011  
CN president Stuart Snyder attends the first-ever Bullying Prevention Summit at the White House, hosted by President Barack Obama

June 14, 2011  
CN signs an agreement with producer Joel Silver (*The Matrix*, *Lethal Weapon*) and Silver Pictures to develop a live-action motion picture *Ben 10*



November 23, 2011  
*Level Up*, CN’s live-action/CG-animated original movie, premieres as the number-one telecast of the day on all television among kids 6 to 11, 9 to 14, 12 to 17 and all boy demos



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- BRB Internacional's **Carlos Biern** on why he still believes producing in 3D is viable
- **Todd Newton** talks the art of hosting Hasbro Studios' *Family Game Night*
- **Eric Levin**, from Techno Source, discusses the challenges inherent in kid-proofing the company's new Android tablet
- The Hub's **Margaret Loesch** recounts landing her first-ever TV job as a typist at ABC

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